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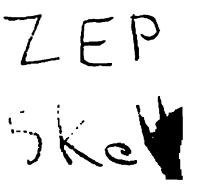
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THE

COMPLETE WORKS

OF THE LATE

REV. PHILIP SKELTON,

RECTOR OF FINTONA, &c. &c.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

BURDY'S LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

EDITED BY THE

REV. ROBT. LYNAM, A. M.

ASSISTANT CHAPLAIN TO THE MAGDALEN HOSPITAL.

IN SIX VOLUMES:

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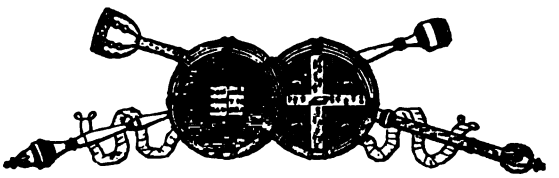

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1824.

TO THE

VERY REVEREND

JOHN PLUMPTRE, D.D.

DEAN OF GLOUCESTER,

&c. &c.

THIS EDITION

OF THE

REV. P. SKELTON'S WORKS

IS

MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

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FIRST VOLUME.

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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

To those who admire sound argument and genuine piety, illustrated and enlivened by genius, we trust that we shall perform an acceptable service in presenting a new and uniform Edition of Skelton's Works, which, as their merit is rare, have lately become proportionably scarce.

To make this more complete than former editions, all the productions of the Author have been inserted, with his Life prefixed; and, doubtless, if any man is entitled to the tribute of Biography, Skelton possesses an undeniable claim. If our Author had not been distinguished for any intellectual superiority, if he had not appeared as the zealous and acute defender of religious truth, but had been satisfied with the glory of good actions, without aspiring to the reputation of an able writer; his life was a specimen of such extraordinary virtue, as should never be forgotten in a Christian community. To devote, as he did, his whole energy of body and mind to the laborious and unostentatious duties to be discharged in obscure parishes of a desolate country—to divest himself of self-interest so entirely, as to consider *his poor* and ignorant parishioners as his

family, and to determine that their wants were to be consulted before his own—to exhaust not only his pecuniary treasures, but (what was a much more painful sacrifice) *to sell his library*, the only alleviation of his solitary hours, for their support—these are instances of wonderful benevolence and zeal, that ought to be carefully recorded, even if the person who exhibited them had no other claim to celebrity. But when to these we add Skelton's literary labours in the cause of Christian truth and holiness, we must acknowledge that he is entitled to all the renown, which the union of virtue and talent can bestow. *Egit scribenda, legenda scripsit.*

The Life of Skelton was written by Samuel Burdy, of Trinity College, Dublin, who, having enjoyed the friendship of our Author, was able to execute the task of Biographer, with the advantage of a considerable fund of accurate and interesting information. Of his materials he has made excellent use; but we cannot speak with much praise of his style. Awkward and mean phraseology might have been overlooked; but when we found indecent, and almost profane expressions, we considered it our duty to expunge them; although, in getting rid of these, we took care not in the least to injure the substance of the Life.

The Works of Skelton himself we have given as we found them, having scrupulously abstained from making any alteration whatever. It will be a great satisfaction to us (and we think a service to the public), if, by this Edition, or from any other circumstance, the Works of Skelton should become more generally known. All who have perused them,

are delighted with, and value them, most highly; but from the obscurity of his condition, and because the sphere of his labours was confined to the sister kingdom, he has not obtained, in England, that extensive perusal which he deserves. Of the number of our Theological writers we cannot justly complain: but many of them teach so drily and tediously, that they never persuade, and others write so vaguely that they never instruct. Skelton seems to have had in view all the excellences of a divine orator, whose scope should be to teach clearly, to convince strongly, and to persuade powerfully.* Closely conversant with the Scriptures, and deeply imbued with their spirit, he explains the truths of religion perspicuously, and without any compromise or reservation. He is too full of sense and argument to be shallow; and, at the same time, his manner is too lively to admit the intrusion of dulness. With a vehemence arising from a deep conviction of the truth of Christianity, and from the sincerity of his own practice, he exerts a power of persuasion which none can resist, unless they have closed and seared their hearts against all the tender and solemn motives of religion.

* Bishop Wilkins's *Ecclesiastes.*

THE LIFE

OF THE

REV. PHILIP SKELTON;

WITH SOME

CURIOUS ANECDOTES.

BY SAMUEL BURDY, A. B.

Virtus post funera vivit.

PREFACE.

THE following narrative will not, I hope, be deemed unworthy of notice in an age so attentive to productions of a similar nature. The person who is the subject of it has published, it is well known, many octavo volumes, which, though not among the most perfect of their kind, on the whole possess such merit as proves him a man of genius. Besides, to write so much in defence of religion and virtue demands, I should think, some gratitude from those who are influenced by a regard for the most important interests of mankind. —The learned works of that most worthy man, his eminent abilities as a preacher, his other uncommon exertions in his ministerial capacity, the singularity of his character, the strict purity of his conduct, and his surprising charities, taken all together, made him perhaps one of the most extraordinary persons that Ireland has produced, in which country he was universally known, and also the frequent subject of conversation. I shall therefore make no farther apology for publishing his life.

In collecting the materials for it I carefully endeavoured to arrive at truth, which is acknowledged to be the first excellence of every historic composition. But lest the reader may not be satisfied of my care in this point, I shall briefly mention my authorities.

Having been recommended to Mr. Skelton, by means of two sisters of his at Dromore, in the year 1780, when I was a scholar of Trinity College, Dublin, I was soon after admitted into his friendship and confidence, in which I continued until he died. During the three last years of my re-

sidence at that university, I passed at least three evenings with him in the week, and in my absence was favoured with his correspondence. In my numerous conversations with him I frequently inquired into the several incidents of his life, and usually preserved the information he afforded me. From his sisters above-mentioned, and some others of his relations, and from the people in the parish where he was born, I learned more particulars both of him and his family. With the materials thus obtained I was not content, but, in the year 1788, went to the several parishes where he had lived either as curate or rector, and conversed with those who were well acquainted with him during the different periods of his life, to acquire more anecdotes, and render my information as accurate as possible. I also, among other places which it is too tedious to mention, extended my journey to the metropolis, and received there such intelligence as made sufficient amends for my trouble. In preparing the materials for the press I have probably taken more pains than it would be prudent to own, being resolved not to offer a work of this kind to the public without serious and mature deliberation.

Down, January 10, 1792.

THE

LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

BIOGRAPHY conveys very useful instruction, setting before us the lives of eminent men, that we may imitate their virtues, or avoid their vices. It is a tribute due to merit after death, and an inducement for others to strive to deserve this honour. It is even more congenial to our feelings than history itself; because few can be statesmen or generals, but every one bears a part in society. The historian introduces us into national assemblies, and presents to us scenes of public commotion. The biographer leads us into the sequestered walks of private life. The one is therefore more dignified and important; the other more pleasing and natural. We are usually curious to know every circumstance of the lives of those, who have been distinguished from the rest of men. Yet so depraved is our nature, that we read with more delight accounts of the destroyers than of the preservers of mankind. We are more pleased to attend the conqueror in his progress of ruin and devastation, than to observe the faithful pastor, carefully endeavouring to remove the doubts, rectify the errors, supply the wants, and soften the sorrows, of the flock committed to his charge. Of this latter description was the great and good man, whose life I now offer to the public.

Philip Skelton was born in the parish of Derriaghy near Lisburn, in February 1706-7. His father, Richard Skelton, was a decent and honest countryman, who held under Lord Conway a large farm at a cheap rent. The father of Richard was the first of the family that came over from England to reside in Ireland. He was an engineer of some repute in that country, and was sent over by King Charles I. to inspect the Irish fortifications. He enjoyed, however, but a short time the benefit of this employment, when the re-

bellion of forty-one began; and being then deprived of it was reduced to difficulties, which were at least not diminished by the accession of Cromwell's party to power; for, as he might expect, they would not restore him to an office conferred on him by the King, the unhappy victim of their ambition. Necessity obliged him now to strive to get an honest livelihood by working with his hands, to which, we may suppose, he was not accustomed before. Such changes, however, in men's circumstances were not unusual at that time, when, by the victory of the hypocritical saints, society was inverted. He soon after married, and had a farm in the county of Armagh, where he resided during the rest of his life.

His son Richard in his younger days lived at Bottle-hill in the same county. He had served an apprenticeship to a gunsmith, and was employed at that trade when he went to Kilwarlin, and married there Arabella Cathcart, by whom he obtained the farm in Derriaghy already mentioned. Having removed, on his marriage, to that parish, he wrought diligently at his trade, until the whole country was put in confusion by the war between William and James. He was then carried off by King James, and compelled to work for his army. His wife, who had two children, and was pregnant with the third, having obtained a pass from the King, retired with her family to Island-Magee, a small peninsula near Carrickfergus; where she was delivered of her third child, and experienced, during her illness, tender usage from the poor inhabitants, who sat up with her at nights to take care of her. "Whose turn is it (they used to say to one another) to sit up with the stranger to-night." Nor was she ungrateful to them for their kindness. She intrusted her house and farm to a Roman Catholic family called Himill, who acting with singular honesty on the occasion, sent her in her retirement abundance of butter, flour, and every other necessary of life, the produce of her farm. With a large share of what she received she rewarded the people of Island-Magee for their services. On her return she found every thing belonging to her carefully preserved by the Catholics, who took as much care of her property as if it had been their own. Such instances of fidelity were but rare in those turbulent times, when bigotry too often destroyed the force of moral

obligations. Her children, on that account, had always a regard for those of the Catholic persuasion. I heard Mr. Skelton often say, that the poor original Irish were naturally faithful, humane, and averse to blood.

His father, who preferred the cause of William, wrought afterward voluntarily for his army. Let us not despise him for being the son of a gunsmith. Men of superior merit do not always spring up in the higher ranks of society. Demosthenes, it is well known, was the son of a blacksmith; yet this circumstance of his origin never detracted from his fame. The poet, his panegyrist, seems to dwell on it with pleasure.

> Quem pater ardentis massæ fuligine lippus,
> A carbone, et forcipibus, gladiosque parante
> Incude, et luteo Vulcano ad rhetora misit.
>
> His father blear-ey'd with the glowing bar,
> That Vulcan forms to instruments of war,
> Sent him from this to learn a nobler art,
> With eloquence to charm the human heart.

In the latter part of his life he quitted the gunsmith trade, which could not be profitable in a country place, and kept a little tan-yard; so that Mr. Skelton used to call himself the son of a tanner. At his father's, he said, they always got beef on a Sunday, but not regularly during the rest of the week. The farm which he had was indeed sufficient of itself to afford a competent support to himself and family; yet it was necessary he should be frugal and industrious, for he had six sons and four daughters. Three of his sons were educated for the profession of clergymen of the established church, of which he was a member. These were Philip who was the youngest, John who was schoolmaster of Dundalk, and Thomas who had the small living of Newry.

Philip, when he was about ten years old, was sent to Lisburn grammar-school, which was then kept by the Rev. Mr. Clarke, a man of eminence in his profession; who, having afterward left that place on account of a dispute with Lord Conway, obtained the school of Drogheda, where he lived to an advanced age. His spirited resistance thus helped to gain him promotion in the world, which too frequently is the reward of tame submission to superiors.

However, he did not leave Lisburn, until after Mr. Skelton had completed the course of his school studies. His father, though he lived within two miles of the town, placed him at lodgings there, that he might enjoy every opportunity of improvement. Sensible of its importance, the parent did not spare expense to give his children the benefit of education. On Saturday evening Philip always went to his father's, and returned to Lisburn on Monday morning.

At first he did not relish his grammar, which seemed dry and disagreeable, and therefore he would not confine himself to it. The master complained of this to his father, who used the following method to cure him of his idleness. He raised him one Monday morning early out of his bed, and having put a pair of coarse brogues on his feet, ordered him to go out immediately to the fields to work with the common labourers. This command he willingly obeyed, supposing it would be less laborious to toil there, than to fatigue his head with hard study. His father made him carry stones on a hand-barrow, and submit to the severest drudgery; not allowing him to come home to his breakfast, but keeping him fasting long beyond the usual time, and then sending him the coarsest food to eat in the open fields. When he returned from his day's work, he treated him as he did the lowest servant. He would not suffer him to keep company with the rest of his children, but bade him go to his companions the servants, and stay with them. Broken down at last by this hard usage he began to relent, and burst into tears. His father then said to him, "Sirrah, I'll make this proposal to you: Whether do you choose to toil and drudge all your life, as you have these few days past, living on coarse food, clad in frize clothes, and with brogues on your feet, or to apply to your books, and eat, and drink, and be dressed like your brothers here?" pointing to his brothers, who, as it was the vacation, had just come down from the university, decked out in Dublin finery. Poor Philip, whose bones ached with the hand-barrow, said, "he would readily go to school, and be attentive to his studies." He kept his resolution, and continued studious ever after.

The success of this project proved the sagacity of his father, who was remarkable for his good sense over the *whole* parish of Derriaghy. The gentlemen of fortune in

that place had such a high opinion of him, that they used to invite him frequently to their houses, for the sake of his conversation. A Bishop Smyth in particular, who lived there, shewed him every mark of attention, and his Lordship's daughters were pleased to make a companion of his eldest daughter, a young woman of sense and accomplishments superior to the opportunities which she had enjoyed. Mr. Richard Skelton had also some knowledge of architecture, being employed to superintend the building of the present church of Derriaghy. His circumstances, by his care and industry, were daily improving, when death carried him off from his disconsolate family in the fiftieth year of his age; while he was engaged in building a dwelling-house, and making a new tan-yard, neither of which were ever after completed. Such are the hopes of man! A few hours before he died, he called to him his ten children to give them a charge. Philip, who had been then but half a year at the Latin-school, he desired to study physic, and learn to cure the disease that was killing his father. He obeyed, as I will shew, the dying command, but fixed on divinity for his profession, to which he believed himself called by a voice more than human. Thus did he lose in his tender years an excellent father, a man of admirable sense, a strict observer of religion, and a careful instructor of his children. He retained ever after a grateful remembrance of his worth. In his Senilia he calls him "his wise and good father." He used to say with Horace, that if he were appointed to choose a father out of all the men in the world, he would take the one he had.

While he lived at Enniskillen, he was once on a visit at Mr. Armour's, of Castle-Coole, where he met with a Mr. Tench, Dr. M'Donald of the diocess of Clogher, and some others. The conversation turning upon the requisites to make a gentleman, on which they differed in opinion, Dr. M'Donald said, education made a gentleman. Skelton denied it. He said, that he only was a gentleman, as Lord Burghley defines it, who has riches derived from ancestors, that possessed them from time immemorial. He told them, there was not one of them a gentleman except Mr. Tench. "As for myself," he continued, "I am no gentleman, my father was only a tanner; yet I would not

change him for the best of your fathers, for he was a man of virtue and religion."

His mother was left with ten children. She had indeed the benefit of the family farm, but land at that time was comparatively of little value, and a great part of hers was rough and mountainous. Consequently her means of support for such a large family were not abundant; but she made amends by her care and prudence in managing her affairs. Her son Philip, who continued still to go to the Latin-school, lived, as it seemed convenient, partly at her house, and partly at lodgings in Lisburn. The sharp medicine which his father administered to him, having cured him effectually of his idleness, he was ever after, as I have said already, extremely attentive to his studies. He that gains the prize of literature must pass through a previous course of discipline while a boy. *Didicit prius extimuitque magistrum.* Skelton's parts, at first, were not remarkably quick or retentive, but his diligence enabled him to overcome every obstacle. When he was at a loss for candles to read at night, which frequently happened, he made use of furze, which he gathered for the purpose, and then throwing them piece by piece upon the fire, read by the glimmering light. Such was the expedient suggested by an ardent desire for learning. He used to tell us, that when he was at school, he and some of his schoolfellows, who were also remarkably studious, often met together in the fields and examined each other most strictly for halfpence. He that could not answer the question proposed was forced to give a halfpenny to the boy who examined him; which made them, as he remarked, prepare themselves with great care, for halfpence were then very scarce.

The following little incident of his life, while he was at the Latin-school, cannot, I think, be unworthy the attention of the curious. Straying one day through the fields, near Lisburn, he happened to shout out on the top of a hill there, and found that the echo repeated the same words successively in a still lower tone. He used afterward often to amuse himself with speaking loud at this place. One morning he was repeating there the first line of Virgil,

Tityre tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi.

when the usher of the school, a Scotchman, of a sour temper, very fat, and remarkable for chewing tobacco, walking near the place, and hearing the echo, imagined he was calling to him in a jeering tone of voice, fat chops, tobacco-box. The Scotchman was so enraged at this supposed insult, that he insisted on Skelton's being turned out of school; if not, he would leave it himself. Skelton told the master the story of the echo, and appealed to his school-fellows for the truth of what he said. But the usher would not be pacified, and at last, as a great favour, was content with his being whipped.

This odd sort of echo near Lisburn is mentioned in his Latin treatise on sounds by Dr. Hales, late of Trinity College, one of the most worthy clergymen of Ireland, whose humility can be only equalled by his learning. For he had none of that stiff dignity, and supercilious importance, which too often distinguish academic authority. The whole account of the echo, conveyed in Mr. Skelton's own words, is inserted in a Latin note at the end of the volume; but, on examination, I find it is of too philosophic a nature to be introduced into a work of this kind. I cannot now recollect any other incident of his life, while at school, worth relating. It appears indeed that he was not treated with much indulgence by the master, who whipped him, merely to please a peevish Scotch usher. To the sons of poor or middling men it would, I think, be a disadvantage to meet with too gentle usage from their preceptors. It is fit they should, from the beginning, be trained to difficulties, with which they may be forced to struggle all their days.

On leaving school, he entered a sizer* in the university of Dublin, as the college books inform us, in June 1724. His tutor was the famous Dr. Delany, who, by his conduct, proved himself his real friend ever after. He applied there with diligence to the useful studies enjoined by that noble seminary, and soon acquired the reputation of a

* It is strange, that he never even insinuated to me, or, as far as I could learn, to any other of his acquaintances, that he entered the college in that capacity. Nor had I the least suspicion of it, until, on examining the college books, I found, that there were two Skeltons, both sizers, at that time in the college. All this might be construed into a sort of pride in him. Yet why should he be ashamed of being once in that academic station, which has produced some of the greatest and most conspicuous characters in Ireland.

scholar. However, his attention to his books did not prevent him from displaying his skill in the manly exercises, in which he could find but few equal to him. He was allowed to be an excellent boxer, nor was he unwilling, if an opportunity offered, to shew his skill in this accomplishment. He was also very dexterous in the small sword, and a complete master in the backsword. He could come up to a St. George, throw an out and cut an in,* save himself, and strike his antagonist.

While he was in the college, he went once to Donybrook fair, and heard it proclaimed there, that a hat was set up as a prize for the best cudgel-player. The two cudgels with basket-hilts lying for public inspection, Skelton, like a second Dares, stepped forward, took up one of them, made a bow to the girls, and challenged an antagonist to oppose him. On this a confident young fellow came up and accepted the challenge. Immediately a ring was formed, and the two heroes began. They fought for awhile on equal terms, warding off the blows by their skill in the science of defence. But at last his antagonist was off his guard, and Skelton taking the advantage, hit him some smart strokes about the head, and made him throw down the cudgel, and acknowledge himself conquered. He thus gained the victory, and won the hat. He then took the hat in his hand, shewed it to the gaping crowd, made a bow to the girls, and told them, "he fought just to please them, but would not keep the hat, that they might have more amusement;" and then bowed again and retired. A hero in romance could not have been more complaisant to the fair sex.

The following trick of his, which has been since practised by some others, is not unsuitable to the character of a young man in the college. He and twelve more dining at an inn near Dublin, when the reckoning was to be paid, they discovered there was no money in the company. Skelton then invented the scheme of blindfolding the waiter, that the first he might catch should pay the reckoning, and thus they all escaped. However, he took care to have the landlord paid for his dinner.

He usually associated with his fellow-students as often

* These are cant phrases used with teachers of fencing with the backsword.

as he could find leisure from his studies; for he was remarkably fond of society, an inclination which adhered to him constantly through life. The fellows of the college, observing a crowd of students about him whenever he appeared in public, used to say to him, "Skelton, you have more acquaintances than any one in the college." In such a place, a similarity of age, dispositions, pursuits, often forms a society more agreeable than is experienced ever after. However, his fondness for society involved him in a very unhappy affair. Ranging once through the town with a number of students, they raised a riot, and a man was unfortunately killed by some of the party. This had a serious effect on him, and made him cautious of the company which he kept in future.

His temper, as may be inferred, was naturally warm and courageous, and unable to brook an affront; of this he gave a sufficient proof while at the university, according to worldly notions of honour. For he had a quarrel with one of his fellow-students, which they thought fit to determine at Stephen's Green with small swords. But when they came to the ground, the seconds interposed, and the affair was thus settled.

This quarrel made his college life very uneasy to him. For his antagonist was some way connected with Dr. Baldwin the provost, who became Skelton's enemy ever after. Baldwin was a man of a haughty temper; he carried every thing in the college by absolute sway: he nominated fellows and scholars at pleasure. The statutes indeed give the provost great authority; as they were tinged with a tyrannic complexion by the famous Archbishop Laud, a prelate of great learning and abilities, but unhappily a slave to ceremonies, and a promoter of arbitrary measures. The young man, who retained a spite against Skelton, instigated by his malice to a false accusation, told the provost he was a Jacobite, and thus, as he expected, roused his indignation against him: for Baldwin was one of the greatest whigs of his day. He was a junior fellow when James II. made a barrack of our elegant seminary. The king turning him out of his fellowship, as he did all others who refused to subscribe to Popery, he was obliged to go over to England, and teach a common English school

for his bread. King William, when he gained the victory, restored him. He was a furious enemy to Queen Anne's last ministry, and was active in forming schemes against them; suspecting they had a design of bringing in the Pretender; and who can say there was no ground for such suspicions? Indeed a dark cloud, which time has not yet wholly dispelled, seems to have been cast over this affair. His opposition to Queen Anne's last ministry caused him to be taken notice of by George I. who made him provost in 1715.

Enraged at Skelton on account of the charge imputed to him, he sent orders for him to come and appear before him. He instantly obeyed, little suspicious of the cause. The provost then told him, he was assured on the best authority, that he was a Jacobite, and of consequence a most dangerous person in the university, where he might corrupt the youth by his bad principles. Skelton, astonished at the falsity of the charge, solemnly declared that he was as strenuous for the house of Hanover as any one in Ireland. But the provost, who placed more confidence in his favourite, said he would not believe him, for he heard it from one on whose veracity he could depend. Hence all his protestations of innocence were vain. The provost then said to him, "Child, I'll ruin you for ever."—"Will you damn my soul, Sir?" Skelton replied. "No," he said, "but I'll ruin you in the college here."—"Oh, Sir," he observed, "that's but a short for ever." By this it appears that even then he had a warm sense of religion, and did not fear the brief resentment of man. The rich and great imagine they have happiness and misery at their control, and can allot them at pleasure. Yet they are very niggard in bestowing one of them, supposing it best to keep it all to themselves, and probably they have much occasion for it. Their liberality with respect to the other, I shall not question.

The dispute, that produced the malicious charge against Skelton's character, was owing chiefly to the conduct of his fellow-student, who imagined that his intimacy with the provost gave him a right to say and do what he pleased. The minion is often more intolerable than his master. But Skelton could not bear his insolence; hence the

quarrel ensued. The provost was scrupulous in keeping his word; he strove to debar poor Skelton from a scholarship, but by a lucky mistake he was baffled in his malicious attempt. He mistook him for another of the same name, and thus Skelton received the reward of his merit, at Trinity 1726.

He piqued himself much on a cut of his (to use the college phrase) at his examination for scholarships. Dr. Delany, who examined in the odes of Horace, met with these words, *carpe diem;* the lad he was examining called it, seize the opportunity. This it seems did not please him, he therefore put it from one to another, till at last it came to Skelton, who said, crop the day. "Right," the Doctor replied, "Why so?"—"Because," said Skelton, "the day is a flower," preserving the beauty of the metaphor. The examiner, many in which office have strange peculiarities, gave him an additional mark for this answer. We often value ourselves more on hits of this nature than on matters of real importance.

He did not abound with money at this time, and especially before he got a scholarship, the emoluments of which are sufficiently known. His two brothers, the clergymen, contributed in some degree to support the expense of his education; but the assistance derived from these and his mother was not sufficient to keep him out of debt and danger. He was once forced to confine himself some weeks within the college for fear of bailiffs, who were prowling about the gates in search of him; for the students would not allow these harpies to come within the walls; if any were so imprudent, they met with very harsh usage, which served as an example to terrify others. The testimony of his friend Mr. Hawkshaw, to whom he was a long time curate in Monaghan, partly confirms the account I have given. For he assured me, that, for some time after he got the cure of that place, he paid Dr. Delany a certain sum every year to discharge a debt contracted while in the college.

The narrowness of his circumstances made him apply more diligently to his books. He had but few temptations to go abroad; he wished to gain that distinction by literature, which he could not by fortune. The rich may slum-

ber away their time, as they usually do, but the calls of nature often rouse the poor, and force them to their studies. Hunger is a most powerful spur to genius. *Magister artis ingeniique largitor venter.* It is this, Skelton used to remark, that chiefly stimulates the Scotch professors to distinguish themselves in literature. Accustomed, he said, to encounter poverty in their youth, and living in a barren country, and keen sharp air, like that of Attica, they easily overcome many literary difficulties, which appear invincible to those who have been bred up in sloth, softness, and plenty.

Baldwin, who was, if possible, still more enraged at Skelton for obtaining a scholarship, strove to vex him by all means in his power. In a short time he found it necessary to call him before him, on a very different occasion from the former.

On the death of Coghil, the great civilian, there was a vacancy for a member of parliament to represent the university. Two candidates were proposed, one of them Dr. Helsham, the noted fellow, and a tory; the other Mr. Palliseer, a moderate man, whose father, the Archbishop of Cashel, had built Palliseer's building in the college, and made a present of a large collection of books for the library. Provost Baldwin, who required humble submission in every thing, being averse to Helsham on account of his principles, sent for the scholars of the house (who with the fellows are the electors), and ordered them to vote for Mr. Palliseer.

Skelton promised, as the rest did, to obey his command. Helsham's party finding now that their candidate would be unable to succeed, set up in his room Dr. Elwood, a senior fellow and a whig, who, on account of his principles, and by making large offers and promises, brought over the provost to his side. He then sent for the scholars again, and bade them not vote for Mr. Palliseer, but for Dr. Elwood. When he delivered his injunctions to Skelton,* he replied thus, "Sir, you ordered me to support Mr. Palliseer, and in obedience to your command, I waited on him, and told

* Dr. Palliseer of Rathsarnam told me, that Dr. Baldwin assured him he was not an enemy to Mr. Palliseer on that election. On the contrary, Mr. Skelton assured me that the provost, on summoning him the second time, positively ordered him to vote for Dr. Elwood.

him I would vote for him; how then can I, consistently with honour, retract my promise?"—"Skelton," said the provost, "you must do as I desire you, or mark the consequence."—"Let it be as it may," he rejoined, "I will not break my word, but I will vote for Mr. Palliseer."—"Sirrah," he replied in a passion, "you are an obstinate impudent fellow, and I never can get any good of you; but I'll make you repent of it yet." On the day of the election, Mr. Palliseer found himself deserted by the majority of his friends, who, through fear of the provost, whose power it was dangerous to oppose, were forced to declare against him. Skelton previously to the election, received an injury on his leg, which lamed him, and made him use a staff. On account of this accident, he came limping into the hall with a huge club in his hand, and a gown about his shoulders; a figure somewhat odd and terrific; for he was a large-sized man, of a majestic appearance. When the provost, who was returning officer, asked him whom he would vote for? he replied, with an intrepid countenance, that he would vote for Mr. Palliseer, and said openly before them all, that it was very ungrateful in them to reject the son of a man, who had done so much for the college; yet the father's liberality to it could not secure for the son the honour of being one of its representatives. The provost's interest inclining to the opposite side, was sufficient to turn the scale against him.

Skelton's conduct at this election was most honourable. No threats of a tyrannical superior could prevail on him to break his word, and desert, at the hour of trial, the man to whom he had promised support. He would not follow a multitude to do evil. The whole tenor of his life was exactly consistent with the instance I have given, as he was always too strict an observer of virtue to yield to the fashionable current of the times.

It appears from Dr. Baldwin's influence at the election, that the university in those times was a mere borough of the provost. If the candidate secured his favour, he was chosen; if not, he was surely rejected. For the honour of modern times, we can boast, that the case is quite altered, and that the freedom of election is fully restored. He that is acquainted with the nature of college politics for these

some years past, must be fully convinced of this. But the subject is too delicate for me to handle with safety. Yet Mr. Skelton's remarks to me, with respect to the college election, though they savoured somewhat of the courtier, may, I hope, be introduced, without giving offence. He said, that the college should always choose men of consequence, and high authority with government to represent them. "Such persons," he observed, "would be able to obtain for them favours from government, which young hot-headed men of narrow connexions could not possibly procure. The fellows of the college," he continued, "have often complained to me that government never make bishops of any of them now, as they used in former times; but how can they expect this, when they choose representatives to oppose them in parliament?"

A part of the college, while he was there, being accidentally set on fire, he exerted himself in carrying water to quench it, which could not be effected till three buildings were consumed. He fatigued himself almost to death, while many of his fellow-students quietly looked on. His brother Thomas was once while a school-boy in imminent danger from an accident of this nature; being confined by a fever in a room in Lisburn when it was on fire; but he was luckily carried out to the fields before the flames reached the place where he lay.

Skelton, finding it impossible for him to gain the provost's favour, resolved to take his degree as soon as the proper time arrived, and quit the college. He accordingly took due care to prepare himself for the examination, which it was necessary to undergo, and he succeeded as well as he could wish; but still there was an impediment in his way. The provost strove to plague him once more before they parted. Being well assured he would be glad to get free of the college, where he was subject to his power, which he had made him too sensibly feel; he at the commencement,* for some idle pretence, stopped him of his degree. He was thus all at once disappointed in his hopes. His only remedy now was to wait with patience till the next commencement, which would take place in about

* Commencements signify the ceremony of taking degrees, which is held twice in the year, viz. on Shrove-Tuesday, and the Tuesday next after the 8th of July.

half a year. When the time began to approach, he considered how he might play a trick on the provost, and get his degree. Accordingly, a few days before it arrived, he waited on him, and, after paying his humble submission, said to him, "Mr. Provost, I am extremely obliged to you for stopping me of my degree last time, because it was what I wished for above all things, and I beg and beseech you may also stop me now, as my friends are forcing me to take it, and quit the college, contrary to my desire." "Ah, you dog," he replied, "what do you mean, do you wish to stay here contrary to your friends' consent? Take your degree, sirrah, and quit the college, or I'll make you smart for it." Skelton began to lament, saying how greatly distreessd he was at getting this unfavourable answer. "Don't be growling here, sir," he said, "but go about your business; I'll not agree to your request, you shall take your degree in spite of you, sirrah." Upon this Skelton with sorrowful countenance, though with joy at his heart, walked grumbling out of the room. "My scheme," he told me, "happily succeeded, so I took my degree, and quitted the college; and a fig for the provost." He commenced Bachelor of Arts in July, 1728, and had his name taken off the college books on the 31st of May following, two years before the natural expiration of his scholarship.

Though Dr. Baldwin treated him with such severity, yet he always spoke of him with respect, and indeed justly, for he was on the whole an excellent provost. He possessed, Skelton said, a kind of solemn gravity suitable to his station. His person and external behaviour were dignified and striking. He required a strict adherence to academic discipline, and set the example himself. He attended chapel twice every day, at ten in the morning, and four in the afternoon. He was also unmarried and a clergyman, an austerity enjoined by the letter of the statutes. Yet he could not entirely overcome the propensities of human nature. His partiality for a certain fair one afforded subject for some scandal, and at length roused the indignation of the students, who rose up against her and turned her out of the college.

Baldwin, it is owned, had most of the qualities requisite for the station he possessed; but their effect was often de-

stroyed by his imperious conduct. His violent expulsion of Dr. Hughes, a senior fellow, for some disrespectful expressions against him in his absence, strongly marks the character of the man. In his political opinions he could bear no opposition. He had an utter aversion to Dean Swift, because he was a tory, and used to say scornfully of him, that he was remarkable for nothing else, while in the college, except for making a good fire. He would not allow his college-woman, he said, to do it, but took that trouble on himself. Baldwin died, when he was above ninety, in 1758, having enjoyed the provostship forty-three years.

Skelton related the following story of his prowess. The students were formerly obliged by the statutes to go to Patrick's Cathedral every Sunday in Lent, which produced violent quarrels between them and the butchers of Patrick's market. At one of these conflicts, the provost ran out before them, and said, "Follow me, my lads, and I'll head you. I am appointed by your parents and friends to take care of you, and I'll fight for you till I die."—"He would have done so too," said Skelton, "for he was as brave as a lion." It was at length found necessary, on account of these quarrels, to pass an act of parliament dispensing with their attendance at St. Patrick's.

I have been so much taken up with his academic scuffles with Dr. Baldwin, that I inadvertently omitted a few of his juvenile exploits, which may, not improperly, be introduced here. Among his other accomplishments, he was a most excellent dancer; he could both dance gracefully, and dance long, two rare qualities united. During the college long-vacations, he amused himself with various exercises at Derriaghy, such as throwing the stone, the sledge, and the like. But long-bullets* was his favourite exercise, in which there was no match for him in the whole parish. Yet, though he excelled the generality of others in every exercise, he owned, he was beat shamefully by individuals in them all.

He went once during vacation on a visit to Mourne, and

* Long-bullets is an exercise, wherein a metal ball of two or three pounds weight is thrown along a public road. He whose ball, in an equal number of throws, goes farthest beyond a fixed point, is victorious.

shewed there at a public meeting many feats of activity; running up turf-stacks, like a cat, without stopping till he came to the top, which amazed every one present. When he saw them surprised at his agility, he challenged any of them to play long-bullets with him. They then produced, after some hesitation, a thin poor-looking body, who, they said, would play with him. Skelton viewed his puny antagonist with contempt. He looked down on him, as Goliah did on David. "Is it you," he said, "that are to play with me?"—"Yes," the man replied. "Well, well," he said, "we'll soon settle this matter." Skelton then took the bullet, and made a huge throw quite confident of success. The little fellow, in his turn, took the bullet, and threw it about twice as far as Skelton, who stood in amazement. He declared he heard the bullet whizzing past him, as if it had been shot out of a cannon; he threw it with such force. Thus was he vanquished by the puny person whom he despised.

The summer, in which he commenced Bachelor of Arts, he spent, as usual, in the parish of Derriaghy, where he met with a terrible accident, which he considered ever after as an instance of the Divine judgment. He was then, as he informs us, twenty-one years of age,* and since he was eight years old, had never once omitted, morning and evening, to offer up his prayers to God, until one morning two or three of his companions broke in on him while he was in bed, and carried him off with them to play long-bullets. While he was engaged in this sport, a three pound ball, thrown by one of his companions, hit a stone, and leaping back struck him above the left eye, and flattened the projecting part of his scull. Falling down apparently quite dead, he was carried to the house of a Mrs. Granger, a woman that knew a little of surgery, who stitched the wound in five different places, and kept him for some time at her own house. A small splinter of a bone came out of his scull, before he quite recovered. This hurt (with extreme abstinence, and large evacuations, necessary to prevent a fever), greatly shattered, he says, his excellent constitution. He had always a grateful sense of the care taken of him by Mrs. Granger, and made her several presents during her

* See "Hylema," 50; vol. v.

life. He sent her (in 1774) a web of fine linen, part of which he desired her to keep for her winding-sheet. She lived until she was a hundred and five. The omission of his prayers on the morning it happened, he supposed ever after to be the cause of this unhappy accident. So early was his mind impressed with a lively sense of religious duty.

Having conducted Mr. Skelton through the preparatory courses of school and college, I proceed to attend him in his progress after he entered into holy orders. When he recovered of the hurt which he received at long-bullets, he lived for a while with his brother in Dundalk, and took on himself the management of the school, which by his presence rose to high repute. However he stayed there only a short time, having obtained a nomination to the curacy of Newtown-Butler in the county of Fermanagh, from Dr. Madden, usually called Premium-Madden, as by his means premiums were first established at quarterly examinations in Trinity College, He was recommended to the doctor by Mr. Brook of Cole-Brook in the same county; and was ordained a deacon for this cure by Dr. Sterne, bishop of Clogher, in whose diocess it lay, about the year 1729. He fasted and prayed two days previous to his ordination, doubtful whether he should get himself ordained or be married. His being ordained for this cure might at that time prevent his marriage, as he was bound to become private tutor to the doctor's children, and reside in his family.

On the night after he was ordained, he and the rest of the young deacons slept in the bishop's house, and one of them lay in the same bed with him. In the morning another of them came to them while they were in bed with a rod in his hand, and began a lashing them in sport. At last, Skelton leaping up, took him by the neck, and threw him down stairs. The bishop heard the noise, and came running to see what had happened. Skelton told him, the young deacon was so flushed with being ordained that he could not behave quietly, but must lash him, and he was forced to shew him the shortest way down stairs. The bishop owned, as he was insolent, that he could not blame him. When he was ordained a priest, he and the rest of the candidates were examined by this same bishop and

his assistant a whole week in Latin, for they would not allow them, all the time of this curious trial, to speak a word of English.

The following story of a bishop's examining a young man for orders I heard him often tell, and once in particular when Dr. Thomas Campbell was in company, who, I dare say, recollects it even now. He happened to come to the bishop's house too late to be examined by the archdeacon with the other candidates. However his lordship said to the young man, "as I have a regard for you, I'll examine you myself." Accordingly he brought him up to his study, which was lined with books, and made him sit down at a table that was covered with huge folios and quartos. Immediately his lordship sat down opposite to him, and thus, as Skelton said, hostilities commenced. His lordship's first question was, "Pray, Sir, how old is this world we live in?" The young man answered he could not tell. "A very sensible answer," his lordship gravely replied, "for the Septuagint says one thing, the Hebrew another, the Valmud another, the Targum another; in fact, no two of them are agreed among themselves about the age of the world, and therefore your answer is the most sensible imaginable." He then asked him again, "How old is the new world?" The young man said, naturally enough, he did not understand the question. "I mean," his lordship said, "how long is it since America was discovered?" The candidate then answered at a guess, it was so long, but happened to be wrong by fifty years. "Very well, very well," replied his lordship, "you are within fifty years of it, which is no great distance, upon my word: this is enough." Thus the examination concluded; *parturiunt montes.* When his lordship came down to the rest of the candidates, he said to them, "Gentlemen, I had some notion of making each of you write a little piece of composition, as is usual on such occasions; but I have thought better of it now, and in place of it, I'll only ask you to listen to a piece of advice, I'll give you after dinner, relating to your behaviour as clergymen, which will be more useful to you, and more pleasing to me, than any nonsense you could write." His lordship then, after dinner, according to his promise, gave them this advice. "You may think," he said, "that good preaching will

make you agreeable to your people: but here I must tell you, you are quite mistaken; it is not for this they'll like you; but I'll teach you a method of gaining all their favours. Look out for some humorous jest book, and pick out all the droll stories you meet with in it, and get them by heart. Then, if you be able, make up some new ones of your own with all the circumstances of time and place, and the like; indeed, if I had leisure, I could tell you a few of my own making, which might serve you on occasions. Take care also to recollect, if possible, every witty thing you hear in company, and fix it in your memory. Thus equipped, you will be well qualified to do the duties of your parish. For when you go to christenings, marriages, or wakes, you may easily entertain every one present by your witty jokes and droll stories, with which, you know, your head will be full; so that your company will be sought for, over the whole parish. With respect to your conduct in church (his lordship continued), I have a word or two to say to you, if you happen to make a blunder in reading prayers or preaching, don't stop to rectify it; but go boldly on; for 'tis ten to one, if a single person in the whole church be listening to a word you say; but if you stop, and go back on the word, and begin to hum and haw, the hearers will immediately prick up their ears, and whisper to one another, Ah! the curate's out, the curate's out: and thus you'll be exposed to ridicule."

The living possessed by Dr. Madden is called Drummully, worth at that time about 400*l.* a year; but the church, of which Mr. Skelton served the cure, is adjacent to the village of Newtown-Butler. When the living of Drummully fell vacant, the doctor was a colonel of militia, and was then in Dublin dressed in scarlet. The right of presenting to this benefice being divided between the doctor's family, and some other; his family had presented on the last vacancy, and of course the other had a right to present now. His family, however, offered to give up all right of presentation in future, if they were allowed to present on this occasion; which was agreed to, and thus the doctor got the living.

The doctor, beside his living, had a very good estate; but as he was entirely devoted to books, or acts of charity

and public good, he left the management of his income, both ecclesiastical and temporal, to his wife, a lady well qualified for the business, as she was of a different turn of mind from her husband. Mrs. Madden was also in a high degree possessed with what we call family-pride. Her grandfather, it seems, had been lieutenant of the Tower of London in the civil wars of Charles I. which made her assume a haughty superiority over most people that approached her. The place of their abode was called Manor-water-house, and is situated three miles from Newtown-Butler. Here Skelton lived as private tutor in his rector's family, having three or four boys to instruct in English, and the rudiments of the Latin and Greek languages. His situation here was not very pleasant, for he had great trouble with his pupils, and especially with the mother's favourite, who assumed great airs, and was very refractory. But Skelton would not be guided entirely by the mother's caprice; he insisted on having the management of the boys to himself, and she on the contrary was very unwilling to grant it. He thus had frequent bickerings with her, as ladies in such cases often interfere from a mistaken affection for their children.

Being confined with his pupils the whole day until evening, he then went out among the neighbours, when he used to say, "Thank God it is evening, I have got loose from jail."

While he was thus busily engaged with his tuition, he was obliged every week to write a sermon, which he was forced to compose in the school-room among his pupils, who were constantly plaguing him with their exercises, lessons, or quarrels with each other. His situation here, it must be owned, was not very favourable for study. To complete all, he durst not, in making his sermons, borrow a word from any book but the Bible. For his pupils, he said, watched him with hawk's eyes, so that if he had any other book but the Bible before him they would immediately have given it out through the whole parish, that he copied and preached other men's sermons; which would surely have prejudiced against him the common country people, who would rather hear any nonsense of our own, than the best sermons of the most famous writers. I remember a sensible man, a dissenting minister, who attempted to read a

chapter or two of the Bible every Sunday to his people; but they began all to cry out against him, saying, "Give us something of your ain, we can read the Bible ourselves at hame." Mr. Skelton was obliged then to draw all his sermons out of his own head, which was too much disturbed by his pupils to be in a state fit for composition. It cannot therefore be expected that these sermons were very perfect in their kind; indeed he often declared, that in a year or two after they seemed so very nauseous to him, that it was as good as a vomit for him to read them. It is fortunate for a writer to see the defects of his own offspring, to which so many authors are blind.

At this time he began to perform some of those wonderful acts of charity, for which he was so remarkable during the rest of his life. The salary derived both from the cure and tuition, considering the trouble he had, was very small. Yet he gave at least the half of it away, hardly allowing himself clothes to put on. The following instance of his charity is well worthy of notice. Returning from church one Sunday, he came to a place where a cabin with three children in it had been just consumed by fire. Two of the children were burned to death; the third shewed some signs of life, but was horribly scorched. Seeing the poor people in want of linen, and touched with compassion, he stripped off his clothes, and tearing his shirt piece by piece gave it to them, as he found it necessary, till he scarce left a rag on his back.

Dr. Madden was, if possible, as charitable as he; his wife who knew his disposition, and was of a contrary disposition herself, took care to keep his pocket empty of money, for she ruled him with absolute sway. A poor woman came up to him one day asking for charity; he put his hand in his pocket, and found he had no money. At a loss how to relieve her, he gave her a pair of new gloves which he happened to have, desiring her to go and pledge them for bread.

Mr. Skelton, while he lived here, published an anonymous pamphlet in Dublin, recommending Dr. Madden's scheme for establishing premiums in Trinity College. This production, being probably the first from his pen that appeared in print, was sent immediately to the doctor, who

was highly delighted with the compliments paid him by the author, which he justly deserved, on account of his endeavours to promote the interests of literature and of the poor. When he had slightly looked over it he brought it into the school-room to Skelton, with joy in his face, and said, he had just now received from Dublin one of the finest pamphlets ever written, and must immediately solicit the acquaintance and correspondence of the author. Accordingly, he prepared a very complimentary letter addressed to the unknown author, requesting he would tell his name and honour him with his acquaintance. This letter, being approved of by Skelton, was sent to the printer of the pamphlet who returned an answer in a few days from the author, expressing the high sense he entertained of the great honour intended him by the good doctor, but that he was under the necessity, for some reasons he could not mention, of concealing his name at present. This answer was shewn to Skelton, who seemed in no wise concerned during the whole progress of the business. A second still more pressing letter was sent to Dublin, and an answer, with a civil refusal, returned; as Skelton judged it for his advantage not to discover the secret. Thus the rector and curate, one from the study, and the other from the school-room, in the same house, continued for a time, by the medium of a Dublin printer, this strange sort of correspondence. All this time, the doctor never suspected the person whom he complimented so highly to be his own curate, and the private tutor of his own children. If he had, possibly he might not have been so very respectful in his language, for people are not too apt to be complaisant to those whom they look on as their dependants, however superior they be to them in learning and abilities, which in this country are but little valued, unless dignified by the station or fortune of the possessors.

Dr. Madden, as I understood from Mr. Skelton, was a gentleman highly esteemed in those times. And justly too, if a life spent in the practice of every private and public virtue entitles a man to the esteem of those who reap the benefit of his services. To the exertions of this worthy man we owe the embellishment of the Dublin Society, the advantages of which have been so often experienced. Mr.

Skelton saw a letter of Swift's to him, he said, in which he set forth in his usual querulous strain, the miseries and calamities of this unhappy country, saying, that the Irish were the most lazy, roguish, worthless people on earth, and that he would do no more for them. The doctor, as well as our great countryman, had a real regard for Ireland, and strove, as it appears, according to his abilities, to serve it. It being customary for him to go among the nobility and gentry soliciting subscriptions for useful purposes, he met with an odd reception in Dublin on an errand of this nature (as Mr. Skelton informed us) from a late nobleman, a famous member of the hell-fire club. His lordship, on being told that the doctor was in the parlour, shrewdly guessing at his business, immediately stripped himself stark naked, and in this state, came running into the room with outstretched arms, saying, "Worthy Dr. Madden, I am glad to see you, how do you do? shake hands with me doctor, when I heard you were here, I was in such a hurry to see you, that I would not wait to put on my clothes." The doctor shocked at the wild spectacle, leaped up, and was for hastening out of the room; but his lordship stopped him saying, "My dear doctor, don't be in a hurry, tell me your business, I would be glad to do any thing to serve you." The doctor pushed by him, but his lordship accompanied him to the street door, where he stood for some time as an exhibition to the passengers.

Skelton had the good fortune, when he lived at Dr. Madden's, to get acquainted with the Rev. William Leslie, rector of the parish of Ahavea, a man of admirable sense, and complete knowledge of the world, for whose advice and friendship he was grateful ever afterward. His prudent and wise directions served to regulate the tenor of his youthful conduct. He called him his second father, and consulted him on every emergency. He declared he was the most sensible man he ever knew, and owned the many advantages he derived from his friendship. When he was rector of Pettigo, this good clergyman on his death-bed recommended his grand-children to his protection, of whom he took a paternal care during his life.

At that time, his age and condition required good advice. His situation at Dr. Madden's was not at all envia-

ble. He was quite weary of his tuition. The lady of the house was proud and parsimonious, and ruled her husband with supreme authority. She wished also, it appears, to extend her dominion over Skelton, and prescribe to him how he should teach her children. To this, it may be supposed, one of his spirit would not tamely submit. Besides, she was highly offended with Skelton for exciting the doctor, by his example, to acts of charity, to which indeed he was sufficiently inclined of himself. She strove therefore to vex him, and make his situation as unpleasant as possible. In this state of penance he continued for two long years, but was at last, for the sake of quiet, forced to resign the cure and tuition, and depend on Providence for his support.

On leaving Dr. Madden's, he repaired to his brother's in Dundalk, where he stayed but a few months, until he got a nomination (in 1732) to the cure of Monaghan in the diocess of Clogher, from the Hon. and Rev. Francis Hamilton the rector. He took his diet and lodging in the town of Monaghan with a Francis Battersby, and in five years after with a George Johnston. In obtaining this cure he succeeded according to his wishes. His active and benevolent mind could not brook being confined to a school-room. He longed for leisure to pursue his favourite study of divinity, and to employ himself as a minister of a parish. His inclinations were all spiritual, and he only desired an opportunity of being more extensively useful; for long ago he had fixed his thoughts on the rewards of a better world than the present.

Yet, at the very beginning, he was in danger of being turned out of his new cure. Dr. Sterne, the bishop, whom Swift succeeded in the deanery of St. Patrick's, being rather an old man, of an odd temper, and a little credulous, was imposed on by some one who told him, that Dr. Madden turned Skelton out of his family, for striving to entice his daughter to marry him. The bishop, believing it to be so, refused to license him for the cure of Monaghan; on which he went to him to justify himself, hoping his lordship was not offended at any part of his conduct. "Ah, you're a sly dog," said the bishop, "you wanted to gain the affections of Dr. Madden's daughter, and get her to marry

you; you are a handsome fine fellow, like your brother, who, you know, enticed a gentleman's daughter." Skelton requested his lordship to apply to Dr. Madden himself, and inquire if he did so. The bishop accordingly asked the doctor, who said the whole was false, and that Mr. Skelton's conduct in his family was most honourable. He then gave him the license desired.

He related most candidly the whole of the affair respecting his brother alluded to by the bishop. His brother Thomas, before he got the small living of Newry, happened to be tutor in the family of Mr. Lucas, of Castle-Shane, a gentleman of fortune in the county of Monaghan. He was, it seems, a handsome agreeable young man, and the squire's daughter fell in love with him. When he obtained the parish of Newry, he used to go frequently and see the family; but perceiving the young lady's partiality for him, resolved to stay away in future. After an absence of four or five months, at last, on receiving many invitations, he paid them a visit again. The young lady took then an opportunity of openly declaring her passion for him, telling him, he was the most cruel of men. Skelton, who had a real affection for the amiable girl, assured her, he would suffer any thing for her sake; the matter being thus settled, he carried her off and married her. His brother Philip, who knew all the circumstances, said he would have been a bad man if he had not. The squire was highly enraged at his daughter's marrying a person, whom he looked on as an inferior, and would never see either him or her, or give her the smallest fortune. The husband therefore, as he had no other income, was obliged to maintain on his small parish a grand lady accustomed to high life, which embarrassed him not a little. However she continued but a short time with him; she died of her first child, and left behind her a daughter, (who obtained her parent's fortune amounting to 1300*l.*) the present Mrs. Ennis, a lady eminent for her piety.

Thomas Skelton was afterward married to Miss Huston, who, if now alive, would be aunt to the Lord Bishop of Down. By her he had a son, who died of a fever after he arrived at manhood. His third wife, for he had three, was widow Carleton, mother to Sir Guy Carleton, now Lord

Dorchester. Sir Guy's eminence in the world was owing in a great degree, I am told, to the care which his step-father Thomas Skelton took of his education. Philip Skelton lived also on terms of intimacy with that great general, so distinguished for valour, conduct, and humanity. He has recommended young soldiers to him, and his recommendation always proved of advantage to those who obtained it.

His brother John of Dundalk married a Miss Turkil. Doctor Skelton of Drogheda is his son, a gentleman highly esteemed in his profession, who has now 40*l.* a year profit rent from a part of the family farm. His father made a decent fortune by teaching. Mr. Skelton had also a brother called Robert, an excellent scholar, who married some person of low station, when he was on the point of going to college. This was an obstruction to his literary progress. He was a man of a singular character, of strong natural parts, but addicted to drunkenness. His two other brothers, Richard and James, were decent country farmers. It is surprising, that the father of all these, who was but a plain honest countryman, should give such education to so many of his children. But this, among others, is a proof of his extraordinary good sense and prudence.

Mr. Skelton entered on the cure of Monaghan with that eager zeal for the salvation of souls, which a warm sense of duty only could inspire. He felt the weight of the obligation imposed on him. Well assured that he must be accountable hereafter for his discharge of the awful trust committed to his care, he resolved to act as became one, whose hopes and fears were placed beyond the grave. Having now got rid of a troublesome tuition, which before had obstructed him in his pious exertions, he gave up all his thoughts and time to the instruction of his people. Their spiritual and temporal welfare was, I may say, the sole object of his care. He laboured earnestly in his ministry; he visited them from house to house, without distinction of sect; he conversed with them freely, mingling entertainment with his instruction. The children he catechised every Sunday evening in the church, and when they became thoroughly acquainted with the original catechism, as in the prayer-book, he made them learn the proof-catechism, which confirms and illustrates the doctrines of the other by texts of Scrip-

ture. On a particular evening in the week, which he appointed, he invited people of every age to his lodgings, that he might instruct them in religion. And thus, by his means, they obtained a knowledge of their duty. I was told in Monaghan, that the children there knew more of religion at that time, than the adults in any of the neighbouring parishes.

In the pulpit he displayed that strong and manly eloquence, which arrests the attention of the hearers. He was neither a dully drowsy lecturer, who calls the congregation to sleep, nor one of the smooth pretty preachers, that tickle the ears of the frivolous and vain. No, he despised such modes of instruction. He explained to his hearers in plain and powerful language the threats and promises of the gospel; he declared to them the indispensable conditions of salvation; he placed, like a faithful servant of the Lord, heaven and hell before their eyes, and left them to make a choice for themselves. His large gigantic size, his strong expressive action, his clear distinct delivery, his power of changing the tone of his voice, and features of his face, to suit his purpose, and above all, the sincerity of his heart, made an irresistible impression on his hearers. They were insensibly carried away with him, they were astonished, they were convinced.

His life was conformable to his preaching. It was a pattern of every virtue, being decorated with piety, chastity, humility, and charity. For this last mentioned amiable quality, he was eminent perhaps above all others in Ireland. Being born, as he considered, for the benefit of the poor, he exerted all his endeavours to mitigate their sorrows. A great part of his annual pittance he gave them, and often scarcely allowed himself even the necessaries of life. Some particulars of his remarkable charities I shall relate in the sequel of this narrative. His life and preaching were attended with the success which he desired. The manners of his people were in a short time greatly improved, and vice and ignorance retreated before so powerful an opponent.

His fixed salary for the cure was 40*l.* which, considering the cheapness of the necessaries of life in those times, was equal to double the sum now. The whole of this he got from his rector, as the curates in assizes-towns had then, I am

informed, no stipend allowed them for attending the jails. Yet with this he contrived to do wonders; for he avoided all unnecessary expense, accounting himself answerable to God for every penny he spent. He kept no horse, but performed in general the duties of his parish on foot. Now and then however, when it was absolutely requisite, he obtained the loan of a horse from some of his parishioners, and especially from a widow in Monaghan, who often obliged him on these occasions. After paying for his diet and lodging, he gave, I am told, his mother out of his stipend 10*l.* a year, to help to support her and the children, and used to visit her at Derriaghy every Christmas, and give her this sum in return for a pair of stockings she made him. Yet this donation could not be always regular, as he was obliged, for some time, to pay his tutor, Dr. Delany, a certain sum every year. He usually travelled all the way to Derriaghy on foot, to save money for her, and the poor. His two brothers, the clergymen, were also liberal to their mother. He generally preached two Sundays at Lisburn church, when he paid these visits of filial duty, and always brought thither a crowded audience; for the people flocked from all quarters to hear him. His mother died in 1748.

About the time he obtained the cure of Monaghan, he made up 20*l.* for his part of his sister Frances' portion, who was married (in 1732) to one John Arbuthnot near Dromore, who dealt in linen cloth. His brother Thomas gave 30*l.* more. Her husband died about ten years after. She bore him six children, all of whom died before they arrived at years of maturity, except one daughter, who was married to James Mussen a farmer. I was well acquainted with his sister, the widow, who some time after her husband's death came to live in Dromore. In her person and features she bore some resemblance to her brother, and was also agreeable, sensible, pious; admired for her conversation, and respected for her virtue. In the latter part of her days, she was afflicted with a disorder in her stomach, which she endured with Christian patience, for, amidst her sufferings, she was cheerful and resigned. This disease at length put an end to her life, in March 1783, in the seventy-fourth year of her age. It was remarkable, that until her death she could read the smallest print in a newspaper without spectacles.

A maiden sister, Mrs. Nanny, as we called her, who was older than Mr. Skelton, lived with her in Dromore. She had lost her sight many years before I was acquainted with her; yet, though she was quite blind, she wished to make us believe she could see. In company, she has remarked to a lady beside her, "This is a pretty colour in your gown, it is finely shaded." She said to me once, "This is a pleasant sunshiny day, the volunteers looked very handsome to-day, their arms glittered beautifully." Her vanity in this respect made her liable to mistakes; she has often, on my coming to see her, called me by a different name, yet, when undeceived, would never acknowledge her infirmity. She came once into a very small parlour, and pretending to look about her, said, "This is a fine spacious room." Mr. Skelton, who was sensible of her weakness, spoke of her thus: "I have a poor old blind sister living in Dromore, who has the vanity to make us think she can see, God help her, poor creature." She died in October, in the same year with her sister Frances, having lost the use of her limbs some time before. Her funeral was decent, at her brother's expense, who had contributed sufficiently to the support of his sisters, all of whom, and of his brothers, were now dead. Immediately on her decease, I wrote to him in Dublin, and received from him a letter by return of the post, of which the following is an extract.

"October 16, 1783.

"Dear Burdy,

"He would be a cruel brother that could wish his sister a longer continuance in such misery, as my poor Nanny endured for the greater part of her last year, at least. My words cannot express the sense I feel of my dear Hannah's* tenderness towards both my sisters, particularly the last, that lay in such a miserable plight so long on her hands. Half a year's rent of the house I am still debtor for to 2*l.* 10*s.* and for funeral expenses, as before for poor Fanny's remains, 5*l.* 13*s.* 9*d.* making in all 8*l.* 3*s.* 9*d.* If Mr. Agnew,† to whom my best wishes, will be so good as to pay her that

* Hannah Arbuthnot, niece by the husband to widow Arbuthnot, his other sister.

† A relation of mine, who acted like a son towards Mr. Skelton's two old sisters living in Dromore.

sum, or the 2*l.* 10*s.* for rent, and draw on me in favour of any one in Dublin, his draft shall be honoured the instant I receive it. Probably he advanced the funeral expenses himself, if she did not take them out of the fourteen guineas I sent her by him. Hannah is the best judge of the maid's attendance and trouble, and may either give her the 11*s.* odd money included in the fourteen guineas, or keep them to herself. If she gives them to the maid she shall be no loser by so doing. If I shall die worth any thing, she will find herself entitled to a considerable proportion of it, and be punctually paid by my sole executor, Dr. Hastings."

* * * * * * * * *

Here he quits the subject of his sister's death, and mentions some particulars respecting myself, with expressions of resentment against certain persons, which it is more prudent to omit at present.

"However," he continues, "the Dean is still our man, on whom we may build some hopes. On the good providence of God I still build higher. My poor endeavours shall never be wanting as long as the old head shall keep above ground.

* * * * * * * * *

"God bless my dear sister Hannah.

"I am most affectionately yours,

"PHIL. SKELTON."

He calls Hannah Arbuthnot his sister for her tenderness to his two old sisters in their sickness. Afterward he thought it best to give her and James Mussen, who, as already mentioned, was married to his sister Frances' daughter, the sum, in his lifetime, which he intended to leave them in his will. Having given this information concerning his sisters, which seemed naturally to succeed in the course of my narrative, I now return to his life.

The money which he gave his mother, or paid his tutor, Dr. Delany, left him, we may suppose, but 30*l.* of his salary; with this he had to pay for his diet and lodging, and give charity to the poor; a duty, as is well known, he was most scrupulous in observing. They generally received from him all except what barely afforded him the necessaries of life, of which he often pinched himself to supply

their wants. Upon urgent occasions, when the pittance he could give was not sufficient to relieve their distress, he applied to people of fortune who usually contributed according to his desire. For who could refuse a character so exalted, that first gave all his own before he would ask any of their property?

He was particularly attentive to the state of the prisoners in the jail, whose situation renders them so helpless. To quit the gay scenes of the world, and plunge ourselves into such gloomy cells to comfort the afflicted, is surely one of the most humane of all offices. On examining the jail of Monaghan he found, that the poor prisoners were often cheated of their proper allowance of bread. But he took care soon to rectify this and every other abuse; so that the condition of the prisoners there was in his time as comfortable as could be expected. To those who were condemned to die, he was a faithful instructor, affording such advice and consolation as were suitable to their melancholy state.

He was once very successful in his endeavours to save the life of a convict at Monaghan, that was condemned to be hanged in five days, but of whose innocence he was well assured. He set off immediately for Dublin, and travelling without delay, on his arrival there went to the privy-council, which was fortunately sitting. He was admitted, pleaded eloquently before them the cause of the poor man, obtained his pardon, and like a good angel, returned to Monaghan, with the happy news, before the day of the execution arrived.

While he was thus seeking for opportunities of doing good, he met with one John Burns in that town, a boy who was born deaf and dumb. Touched with compassion at his unhappy state, he instructed him carefully in the Christian religion, for which he was prepared, by having been taught to read and write. Some years after, John Burns published a book by subscription, at the price of 6*s*. entitled a Chronological History of the World, by which he made a considerable sum of money. Mr. Skelton, it is supposed, helped him to write this book, and procured him many subscribers. I dipped a little into it, and found it to be a registry of remarkable events, which might be consulted on occasions, but could not be read over without weariness.

He keeps now a little shop in Monaghan. Having the curiosity, when I was there, to go and see him, I perceived he was a remarkably intelligent man. I was told that Mr. Skelton taught him to read and write, but his wife undeceived me, assuring me, that he only instructed him religion, after he was prepared to receive it.

His endeavours to convert one Craven in the same place, a notorious sinner whose wicked life gave offence to every sober Christian, were attended with equal success. When he went to him and told him his business, warning him of the danger of his evil ways, the man was so desperately wicked, that he took a spit, and ran at him to stick him. Skelton was forced then to make his escape. However he had the courage to go back, and, at last, after much danger and difficulty, by long perseverance, by his awful lectures, and the divine aid, brought him to a sense of religion, and made him a good Christian. He produced indeed a sensible reformation in the manners of his people, thirty or forty of whom usually attended prayers on a week-day.

When he had acquired sufficient knowledge in divinity for instructing his people, he applied himself, as his father on his death-bed desired him, to the study of physic. For four years, he informs us,* he was employed at this useful science, and in this particular also was well qualified to serve his poor parishioners, whose lives were often sacrificed by ignorant quacks. Before he ventured to prescribe, he consulted a physician of eminence how he should conduct himself in difficulties. The physician then gave him this advice, "Sir, I advise you not to prescribe, unless you are sure you understand the disorder, and that the medicine will be of use. As for myself, physic is my trade, and when I go to see a patient, I am forced to prescribe something, should it be even brick-dust, to preserve my character, otherwise the people would imagine I had no skill; but as you are under no such necessity, you may do what is best." He took the physician's advice, and by this means was of great use to his parishioners, for he cured many, and killed none, which but few of our doctors can boast of.

He used once an extraordinary application to effect a cure on a poor woman at Monaghan, who was a little de-

* See "Senilia," 174; vol. vi.

ranged. Being sent for to visit her in the capacity of a clergyman, he went walking with a long pole in his hand; and when he came to the cabin, was shewn into a sort of a room where she lay. "What ails you, my good woman?" he said to her. "Oh, sir!" she answered, "there is a little woman with a red cloak and a black bonnet that haunts me night and day, wherever I go, and gives me no peace." —"Where is she now?" he said to her, "Oh, sir! there" (pointing with her hand) "on the bed-post, looking straight in my face."—"Stand off all of you," he said to the people about him. Then he took the pole and whirling it round his head, hit the post a smart stroke with it, and made it crack again. "Where is she now?"—"Oh, sir! there, on that sod in the corner of the roof;" pointing to it. "Stand off," he said again; then whirling the pole as before, he hit the sod a harder blow with it, and knocked the greater part of it down on the floor. "Where is she now?"—"Sir, she is just on the cupboard there, looking at me."—"Stand off, all of you;" then he struck the cupboard with such force as to break the tea-cups on the shelves. "Where is she now?"—"Oh, sir! she just flew out of the window." Thus he cured her of her delirium.

He was also sent for to visit a man in the same parish affected with a similar disorder. When he came into the room where he was, which happily had an earthen floor, he saw him sitting on it with the coals of the fire all about him in little heaps here and there, as if he were roasting potatoes. "What are you doing with the coals?" he said to him. "I am roasting devils," he answered. "You ought rather, man," said Skelton, "to get some water and duck them, for fire is their own element."—"I believe so," replied he. However, he humoured him so well, that before he left him he got him both to eat and sleep, which he had not done for some time before.

Having wrought these cures on persons disordered in their brain, he tried his skill upon a hypocritical enthusiast at Monaghan, a weaver, who, pretending a divine mission, set up to preach a new religion, and drew some of his people after him, chiefly by wearing a white hat. While a number of them were about him one day, Mr. Skelton came up to them and said, "David, why do you wear the

white hat?"—"Because, Philip," replied he, "I have no money to buy any other."—"Well, well, David," he said, "if I buy a new half-guinea black hat for you, will you wear it?" He returned no answer. "David, I say, will you wear it?" Still he continued silent. "My friends," Mr. Skelton said to the people, "you see all his religion is in the white hat; he'll not part with it; take away that mark of distinction, and then there will be no more virtue in his religion." The people being convinced by what he said, quitted their new teacher, who was forced to go home to his trade.

Though Mr. Skelton was usually employed in the serious business of his profession, he could now and then relax from such severity, and partake of innocent amusements and exercise. There were few, it appears, equal to him in the manly exercises; for in size, strength, and activity, he was superior to most men. He told me he has lifted up some huge weights, which no ordinary person could move. In the walks of the plantation at Monaghan, he threw the sledge and stone, played long-bullets on the public roads, and performed many other manly exercises. He could wind a fifty pound stone round his head without any difficulty, which shews the amazing strength of his arms. He found it requisite indeed, even then, to make use of his hands to chastise the insolent.

One Sunday, after church, riding along with a lady to a gentleman's seat some distance from Monaghan, he came up to a parcel of tinkers on the road, whom he heard uttering horrid oaths, for which he rebuked one of them in particular in these words, "Sirrah, it would be more fit you had been at divine service than be thus profaning the Lord's day." The fellow gave him a saucy answer, and continued cursing as before. He then threatened to correct him if he would not desist, which made him more profane and abusive. Skelton could bear no longer, but leaped off his horse and struck him; the rest took his part, but he soon beat him and the whole troop of tinkers. He thus made them sensible of their crime by the only argument of which a tinker could feel the force. Then mounting his horse, he rode hastily off with the lady to the gentleman's house to which he was going, that he might be there before they

should hear of it. But with all his speed the news travelled there before him, and on entering, they complimented him on his boxing and beating the tinkers.

He exerted his courage again on a similar occasion. A young officer, proud of his red coat, which he had just put on, came into the hall of an inn (while he, being then on a journey, happened to be in the parlour), and to shew his cleverness, began reproving the waiter, and uttered a volley of horrid oaths. The waiter retaliated, and thus they were going on, when Skelton coming out of the parlour, told the officer, that he was a clergyman, and that it was very offensive to him to hear such horrid swearing, and begged he would desist. The officer then said to him, "You scoundrel curate, what is it to you?" Skelton gravely replied, "Young man, this is not proper language to one of my profession, merely for giving you good advice." —"You puppy you (for he thought Skelton was afraid), you deserve to be kicked for your impertinence;" and then he uttered some blasphemous oaths. "Well sir," said Skelton, "since fair means will avail nothing, I'll try what foul can do." Upon this he fell to him with his fists, and cuffed him through the hall of the inn, and soon cooled the captain's courage, and made him quiet and submissive. Thus he chastised the military man for his profaneness, exerting his valour in the service of God and religion.

It appears that he was fond of paying visits, and, among others, he sometimes visited Dr. Maul, that worthy prelate, who, when bishop of Dromore, lived in the old see-house at Maheralin.* He once borrowed a horse from a Mr. Wrightsome of Monaghan to go thither. This horse being slipped in the back by the carelessness of some of his lordship's servants, the bishop gave him another one in exchange which was not quite so good. But afterward, as a recompense to the man, he bestowed on him his sermons.

Mr. Skelton set out in his ministry in the character of an avowed champion of the orthodox faith. Deriving his religious principles from the pure source of information, the Holy Scriptures themselves, he could find in these no real ground for the opinions of our modern refiners. Consequently he declared open war against all Arians, Soci-

* A small village in the county of Down.

nians, and the like, considering it his duty to attack boldly these adversaries to truth; and he published several anonymous pieces against them. He found leisure, he said, amidst all the duties of his profession, "to switch the Arians now and then." These little productions, and others of his on different subjects, were published by a printer's widow in Dublin, who having a just sense of honour, would on no account discover his name. She had, therefore, the talent of secret-keeping, for which some persons will allow the sex no credit.

Some of his productions were of a temporary nature, and consequently were not republished by himself in his works; of these it cannot be expected I should take a regular notice.

In 1736, he published a pamphlet, the title of which is "A Vindication of the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Winchester," &c. A book entitled "A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Lord's Supper," was ascribed to his lordship. In this he asserts, that consecration of the elements is without Scriptural precept or example, and that this sacrament is intended merely to commemorate our Lord's death. Here he insinuates, that no previous preparation, or resolution of amendment of life, is necessary for receiving the sacrament worthily.

Skelton, under a pretence of defending his character, exposes him. "It is very unjust," he says, "to suspect that a right reverend prelate, who is more pious, judicious, orthodox, and learned, than any that ever was, or ever will be, who has sworn and subscribed to all our articles, and has so tender a conscience, should be capable of writing so bad a book. It is a scandalous age, that ascribes such a work of darkness to such an apostolical messenger of light." Then he answers all the arguments produced by the author in such a manner as to satisfy any reasonable reader.

This production was very pleasing, it seems, to Dr. Sterne, the bishop of Clogher. When he read it, he sent for him, and said to him, "Did you write this, Mr. Skelton?" shewing him the little piece. Skelton gave him an evasive answer. "Well, well," he said, "'tis a clever thing, you're a young man of no fortune, take these ten guineas,

you may want them." "I took the money (he observed to me) and said nothing, for I was then a poor curate."

He published in the same year "Some Proposals for the Revival of Christianity." The design of this piece is to ridicule the infidels and enemies of our church. The great objection, as they think, which many have to the Christian religion in this country is paying tithes to support the clergy, who do not deserve them. He therefore comes into their scheme. The church must be destroyed, the clergy turned out, hanged or banished, or if any remain they must live without food or clothes; the Bible is then to be burnt, and Magna Charta of course. Then a pure Christianity, free from any low, temporal motives, will take its place. This scheme might possibly suit the refined notions of the present day. His ridicule, however, is in general too clumsy to have much effect.

Some one of Swift's friends carried this pamphlet to the Dean in Dublin, to find out if he wrote it, every anonymous production at that time, of any tolerable merit, being attributed to him. Yet he formed a determination, to which he strictly adhered, not to acknowledge or disavow any anonymous performance, on his being asked if he wrote it; and, therefore, when Skelton's piece was brought to him, he only said, after reading it over, "the author of this has not continued the irony to the end."

In 1737, he published a Dissertation on the Constitution and Effects of a Petty Jury. Trial by a petty jury, according to the present mode, is, as he imagines, a temptation to perjury, and the chief cause of the general corruption of manners which prevailed in these kingdoms. He therefore advises, that a curious sort of ballot should be substituted in its place, which he thinks would produce most happy effects, and recommends it to parliament to have his scheme made a part of our constitution; the members who would be active in effecting this should, he says, be justly called the preservers of their country. This piece is written with sufficient sense and perspicuity; the inconvenience that attends forcing people by hunger and other uneasy sensations to be of one opinion is clearly pointed out. Yet I doubt if the chief corruptions, of which he com-

plains, be owing to a petty jury; for we see other countries, where this mode of trial does not subsist, at least as faithless and wicked as our own.

Soon after this pamphlet was published in Dublin, the Attorney-general, stopping his carriage at the printer's, inquired who the author of it was? The woman, as she was desired, refused to tell. "Well," he said, "give my compliments to the author, and inform him from me, that I do not think there is virtue enough in the people of this country ever to put his scheme into practice."

Mr. Skelton had, I understand, a ready turn at composition, having often composed, as he told me, a long sermon in twelve hours, which was no ordinary day's work. To write a sermon well is possibly more difficult, than to compose equally well any other piece of prose of the same length. The biographer and historian have materials provided for them; their business then is only to arrange with skill, and express with perspicuity. The sermon writer, beside this, must find out materials for himself. He must therefore exercise his invention, no easy employment, which the others need not. While he is thus employed, he must use also his judgment, in choosing or rejecting, amidst the wild variety which his imagination presents. He must examine into the different motives and actions of men, restrain their unruly appetites by shewing the consequence of indulgence, set before them their real interests, convince by powerful arguments, and find out, if it be possible, the avenue to their hearts. He must fight against the passions and prejudices of the human race; he must strive to make a man war with himself, and tear out from his breast every corrupt desire. A biographical or historical composition, though but indifferently executed, often engages the attention of the reader by the facts it contains; but in sermons, or works of morality, or disputation, which consist more of arguments than of facts, the reader's attention must be secured chiefly by the ability of the composer.

His fame, as a preacher and a writer, his extraordinary care as an instructor of a parish, and his wonderful acts of charity and goodness, began, about the year 1737, to be the subject of conversation, not only in the diocess of Clogher, and other parts of the North, but also in the metropolis.

He had then some reason to expect from his bishop a degree of attention suitable to his deserts. But here he was unhappily disappointed. He saw living after living given away; but there was no notice taken of him. The bishop of Clogher, Dr. Sterne, usually sent for him, after he had bestowed a good preferment upon another, and gave him ten guineas, which Mr. Skelton frequently made a present of to a Mr. Arbuthnot, a poor cast-off curate, who was unable to serve through age and infirmity. He never asked, he said, his lordship for any thing, but he thought his works should speak for him. "Men of real merit," he remarked, "are always modest and backward, but blockheads tease bishops, and give them no peace, till they get something: they therefore usually prefer them to get rid of them."

Non missura cutem, nisi plena cruoris hirudo.

About the year 1738, his first rector, the Hon. Francis Hamilton, left Monaghan, on obtaining a benefice in the same county, and the living of Dunleer. A Mr. Douglas then got Monaghan by exchange, a man of a weak constitution, whose death, it was expected, would soon make a vacancy.

Dr. Sterne, the bishop of Clogher, gave, it appears, but little encouragement to literature. Mr. Skelton said, that he promised some clergyman in his diocess a living, upon condition of his writing a treatise to prove, that man could scarce know more of his duty than a brute without the assistance of revelation. The clergyman, who, I believe, never wrote the piece, advised Skelton to do it as he had a ready pen; but Skelton, though his opinions coincided with the bishop's, having no positive offer, thought it best not to volunteer himself in the cause. He had little or no expectations from his lordship; the preferments were given away to persons whose qualifications were different from his. Of this neglect he could not be insensible; for a man of learning and abilities must surely be offended to see the dull and illiterate placed over his head in a literary profession. He resolved therefore to quit a diocess, where his merits were overlooked, as soon as an opportunity offered. This happened in a short time.

Dr. Delany, who, as I mentioned before, was his tutor at

college, perceiving his unpleasant situation in the diocess of Clogher, procured for him an appointment to the cure of St. Werburgh's, in Dublin. This was extremely agreeable to Mr. Skelton, because he would then have a wide field to display his eloquence, which before was confined within too narrow a compass. His friend, Dr. Delany, could also more conveniently recommend him there, on account of his abilities, to the notice of the great. These reasons struck Mr. Skelton very forcibly, and inclined him to go to St. Werburgh's. He had then, he said, a fair opportunity of speedy promotion, if he had embraced it, but unhappily he did not. Who can foresee every instance of human perfidy? When he was just on the point of quitting the diocess of Clogher, the bishop perceiving it would be to his discredit, that a person of such abilities should leave his diocess for want of due encouragement, and influenced also by another motive, which I shall mention afterward, sent a favourite clergyman to him with a message to this purpose, "that if he stayed in his diocess, he would give him the first living that should fall." Skelton, depending on his lordship's word (for what should be more sacred than the promise of a bishop?) informed his friend Dr. Delany, that he would not take the cure of Werburgh's, but that he would continue in the diocess of Clogher, on the bishop's promise of the first vacant living. Accordingly, the cure of Werburgh's was otherwise disposed of. Skelton's only dependance now was upon the bishop of Clogher, who was bound by every tie of honour to provide for him. But his notions of honour were not over nice. I am sorry that my regard to truth obliges me to declare, that his lordship broke his word. The first living that fell was that of Monaghan (in 1740), where Mr. Skelton was curate, and his lordship, disregarding his promise, gave it to his nephew Mr. Hawkshaw, a young gentleman who had lately entered into orders.

When he bestowed the preferment on his nephew, he said to him, "I give you now a living worth three hundred a year, and have kept the best curate in the diocess for you, who was going to leave it; be sure take his advice, and follow his directions, for he is a man of worth and sense."

Hence it appears, that his lordship made his promise with a fixed determination to break it. He expected from Mr. Douglas's state of health that the living of Monaghan would soon be vacant, and he was resolved in his mind to give it to his nephew, but he wished to have Skelton to assist him, and feared lest his leaving the diocess in displeasure, might bring censure on himself; he therefore fixed on the scheme of sending a divine with a promise which he never intended to perform. Every circumstance relative to this affair I mention upon the authority of Mr. Skelton himself, from whom I have heard it above twenty times. Mr. Hawkshaw, who is still alive, is a gentleman of too much honour to deny it. Yet it is but justice to own, that no blame can be laid to him. Possibly he did not know of the bishop's engagement with Mr. Skelton; or if he did, where is the man that in such a case would refuse a good living when it is offered to him? But by his conduct afterward to Mr. Skelton it appears that he thought him injured, or at least well worthy of a higher station in the church, for he treated him with singular respect and esteem.

Mr. Skelton did not bear his lordship's breach of promise with remarkable temper. He expressed his resentment with great plainness. "God forgive me," he used to say, "I railed against him most violently, but he did not regard it; his station placed him far above me, and what did he care for the censure of a poor curate?" He never attended a visitation during the remainder of his lordship's life, which continued for a series of years. The bishop never asked for him, nor seemed surprised at his absence, for his own breast told him the cause of it. After his promise to him he disposed of many livings without offering him one of them. "I saw then," said Skelton, "sorry fellows, time after time, put over my head, but I could not mend myself, though it vexed me more than it ought." It appears that the sense of his injury had some effect on his patience. He was then a young man; his temper was warm, his notion of honour just and pure; he expected that the conduct of so dignified a personage as a bishop should be regulated by the same principles as his own. His disappointment in this particular, especially as it touched

him so closely, made him express his resentment against the person that deceived him. All this was the natural and excusable effect of the injury which he had sustained.

The respect which Mr. Hawkshaw entertained for Mr. Skelton, his curate, was shewn when he first obtained the living. He said to him, "Sir, I am but a very young man, and you are fit to direct me; give me your advice, and I'll do whatever you desire me." This shewed him to be a young man of a noble and ingenuous disposition, which he displayed in the whole of his subsequent conduct towards Mr. Skelton. Under such a rector, he must have been as happy as the condition of a curate, situated as he was, could admit.

Mr. Hawkshaw, who was himself scrupulously attentive to his duty, told me, that Mr. Skelton gave him the clearest ideas of the duty of a clergyman that could possibly be conceived. He was often forced, he said, to contrive secretly to attend the sick, as Mr. Skelton would be angry at him if he would not let him go himself; a noble emulation between a rector and a curate!

Though Mr. Skelton strove to act so consistently with the character of a clergyman, yet he could not escape the censure of a sour fanatic. One John Porter, a presbyterian churchwarden, coming in upon him on a Sunday morning, when he happened to be shaving himself, seemed surprised, and told him it was a shame for one of his profession to shew such a bad example. "Well, John," said he, "if you think it is your duty, present me."—"I believe I will," he replied. At the visitation, he asked the bishop, if a clergyman could be presented for shaving himself on a Sunday? The bishop said he thought not; this made John stop his proceedings.

However, he was actually presented to the bishop for abusing a Mr. Wrightsome at a vestry, where parishioners usually display their eloquence. A vestry being held at Monaghan a short time before to bring an overseer to an account, who had the management of some repairs in the church, Wrightsome (who formerly lent him the horse) openly insulted him there before all the people. Skelton then told him, shaking his fist at him out of the reading-desk, that if he had him out of that place he would chastise

him for his insolence. This gave rise to the charge laid against him, which set forth, "that he was a wrangling, bullying clergyman, and a dangerous man to deal with, as he would readily strike any one who seemed offensive to him." The bishop disregarded their accusation, which was drawn up by one Little, who was rebuked by Mr. Skelton and Mr. Hawkshaw for his lewd pleasures. The common report is, that he leaped out of the reading-desk, and beat Wrightsome in the aisle. But a person of veracity who was present assured me, that he only threatened him in the manner I have mentioned.

At another vestry he was almost involved in a serious quarrel with a major of the army. The major having affronted him there, as he thought, when he came out of the church, he threw off his gown, and challenged him to fight him; "but the major," he remarked to us in conversation, "though he was one of the bravest men on earth, treated me with contempt; for he scorned to fight a clergyman." He thus candidly allowed him his merit. He always spoke with horror of his conduct on that occasion, and begged God's pardon, pleading as an excuse the violence of passion, which hastily incensed him to give the challenge. For in his serious and sober days he had an utter aversion to duelling, which he considered as sacrificing one's soul at the shrine of false honour.

He related a curious remark of Swift's upon an affair of honour of this nature. A friend came one morning to see the Dean in Dublin. The Dean bade him sit down. "No," he replied, "I cannot stay, I must go immediately to the park, to prevent two gentlemen from fighting a duel."—"Sit down, sit down," said the Dean, "you must not stir, let them fight it out, it would be better for the world that all such fellows should kill one another."

The strict attention that Mr. Skelton paid to the duties of his profession prevented his being engaged in the softer concerns of human life. I question if he ever was deeply in love, though it is certain that he made some advances in the passion. He seems indeed to have been proof against the fascinating charms of the fair, whose gentle weapons have conquered the greatest heroes and philosophers, and made them submit to their yoke. Monaghan was the

scene of his attempts in love, and possibly a short account of these may not be unentertaining to my readers.

He was once courting a young lady, and when they were just on the point of being married, she said to him one day, "My dear, as you are but a poor curate, how will you provide for our children?"—"Why, my love," he answered, "suppose we have three sons, I'll make one of them a weaver, another a tailor, and the third a shoemaker, very honest trades, my jewel, and thus they may earn their bread by their industry."—"Oh!" she replied, "never will I bring forth children for such mean occupations."—"Well then," said he, "I have no other expectations, and of consequence you and I will not be joined together, for between your pride and his poverty poor Phil. Skelton will never be racked." Thus the match was broke off. Soon after this one S** S**, a fine fellow with a gold-laced waistcoat paid his addresses to the young lady, who was so much captivated with his appearance, and especially with the waistcoat, that she instantly married him without once inquiring how he would provide for her children. However, they lived very unhappily; he starved her, and she in turn was guilty both of drunkenness and adultery. Skelton often thanked God he did not marry her, observing that he had a fortunate escape, for she would surely have broken his heart. If she had married him, he said, she would have got rough plenty; but she preferred the man with the gold-laced waistcoat, and was thus deceived by outward show.

He paid his addresses once, he told me, to a young lady, who, in her conversation with him, began to talk boastingly of her great family, saying what grand relations she had, and the like. "Upon this," he remarked to me, "I found she would not answer for a wife to me; because she would despise me on account of my family, as my father was only a plain countryman, and therefore I thought it best to discontinue my addresses for the future."

Again, he was courting another young lady, and was just going to be married to her; when happening to find a gay airy young fellow in a private room with her, he, in his rage, took the beau with one of his hands and held him up

before her, as you would a puppet, then carrying him to the stairs, let him drop. When he had thus punished the gentleman, he broke off from the lady in a passion, and would never visit her again in the character of a lover. His brother Thomas strove to dissuade him from this resolution, telling him he ought to think the more of the young lady for having many admirers. But his advice did not avail, as he observed, that if she were fond of him, she would have no familiar intercourse with another.

He seemed indeed once to have had an ardent passion for a Miss Richardson, for in his eagerness to see her, he rode across the lake of Coothill in the great frost, without perceiving he was riding on ice. However, we may suppose his fondness soon began to cool. His situation of curate, I should think, made him cautious of plunging too deep into love. He knew that marriage must have confined him still more in his charities, which were always nearest to his heart; unless he could get a good fortune by it, a boon seldom conferred on one of his station. He therefore strove to keep down his passions by abstinence, and lived for two years at Monaghan entirely on vegetables. I was told indeed that he would once have been married to a young lady, had he not been disappointed of a living that was promised to him. He had however pure and refined notions of love; nor did he, like some others, affect to ridicule that gentle passion. He thought it cruel of a parent obstinately to thwart the affections of a child; unless there was a glaring impropriety in the choice. "Poor things (he used to say of two lovers), since they love one another, they should let them come together, it is a pity to keep them asunder."

In 1741, he published the Necessity of Tillage and Granaries, in a letter to a member of parliament. The art of cultivating the ground, next to the care of our souls, is certainly the most useful to man. Consequently, any piece of writing, which has agriculture for its object, is worthy of attention. The estate of the member of parliament, to whom this letter is addressed, lay in the south of Ireland, though of a soil admirably fit for tillage, by a pernicious sort of management, was applied almost entirely to grazing; and its condition is yet too much in need of im-

provement. In this letter he shews by the strongest arguments the excellence of agriculture over pasturage, advising the gentlemen of fortune, from motives of private interest, to encourage the one in preference to the other. As a consequence of the neglect of tillage, and the want of public granaries, he takes notice of a horrible famine that prevailed in this country for the two years before he published his letter. "It was computed, that as many people died of want, or of disorders occasioned by it, during that time, as fell by the sword in the massacre and rebellion of forty-one. Whole parishes in some places were almost desolate; the dead were eaten in the fields by dogs, for want of people to bury them." The letter proves his knowledge in agriculture, and contains many excellent precepts, which, if put in practice, would help to civilize the south of Ireland, which is sunk in idleness and sloth, and ready on every occasion to burst forth into acts of violence and disorder. Its style is remarkably perspicuous, though somewhat tinctured with vulgarity, which might possibly be owing to the nature of the subject which it treats of. It has been remarked by some judges of agriculture, that many of his calculations in favour of the farmer will not hold good in practice.

In the same year he published, in the transactions of the Royal Society, a piece entitled "A Curious Production of Nature." It gives an account of a great number of caterpillars, that crawled (in 1737) on some trees in the county of Monaghan, leaving behind them a fine silken web on the bark of the trees. Some of these continued for two years, but were nearly all destroyed by the frost in the terrible winter of forty. Many distempers, he imagined, are owing to invisible insects.

About this time he was nearly brought into difficulty by an anonymous publication. His brother Thomas having a quarrel with one Steers, who first carried on the Newry canal, prevailed on him to write a pamphlet against him, which was very severe, and vexed Steers so much that he threatened a prosecution. The printer told him he must for his own sake declare his name; on which Mr. Hawkshaw advised him to conceal himself, until the storm would blow over, an advice which he found it prudent to take. How-

ever, the man's passion cooling after a while, he ventured to come out from his retreat.

Having now given up all hopes of preferment from the bishop of Clogher, he accepted (in 1742) of the tuition of the present earl of Charlemont. Mr. Hawkshaw advised him to make a trial of it, as it might tend to advance him in the world, offering in the mean time to keep the cure open for him. His tuition seemed at first so agreeable to him, that he wrote to Mr. Hawkshaw to dispose of the cure of Monaghan, for he would stay where he was on account of the civility he met with. Accordingly, Mr. Hawkshaw began to look out for a curate, and had nearly fixed upon one, when he received a letter from Skelton, informing him, he would quit the tuition and resume his cure. This sudden change of sentiment in him it is necessary to account for.

Mr. Adderley, who had married lady Charlemont, and was guardian to the minor, on her death, would lose his place if he could not procure sufficient security. He applied to Skelton, who, by his acquaintance with one Law, cashier to the bank of Fede and Wilcocks, got that bank to promise to give security. At this time, the bank of Mr. Dawson offering the same, Mr. Adderley gave it the preference. Skelton was angry at him for putting him to so much trouble, and then making a fool of him. This was the beginning of their quarrel. He also, it seems, gave lord Charlemont some advice that was disagreeable to Mr. Adderly.*

This little dispute with the guardian producing some ill humour between them, Skelton determined to resign the tuition, and took the following method to give him warning of his intention. Mr. Skelton, and he, and some more company, sitting one day after dinner over a glass of wine, Mr. Adderley said to Skelton, who was tedious in drinking his glass, "You are hunted Mr. Skelton;"—"Yes sir," said he, "I have been hunted by you this some time past, but you shall hunt me no more." Accordingly he gave up the care of his lordship's education, and returned to his cure.

It appears, that even then Mr. Skelton had a very high opinion of lord Charlemont. Soon after he left him he pub-

* This intelligence relating to Mr. A. I received at Monaghan from a person, to whom Mr. Hawkshaw recommended me to apply for authentic information.

lished (in 1743) "Truth in a Mask," with a dedication to this nobleman. At the beginning of it he says, "It was for many and weighty reasons, which in charity he forbears to mention, that he chose to quit him so soon." He acknowledges that no blame could be laid to his lordship. It is easy indeed to observe by the dedication, that he looked on lord Charlemont in his juvenile years to be far superior to the generality of our young Irish lords; nor has the maturer age of this venerable nobleman disappointed the expectations formed of him in his youth. The advantages derived to this kingdom from his exertions, and from those of the illustrious armed patriots, who chose him for their commander, men who sacrificed private ease and profit to the public good, are too well known to be dwelt upon here.

His reason for writing "Truth in a Mask," which consists of thirteen allusions, is thus expressed in the dedication; "I have found by experience, that the naked truth is displeasing to most people, and even shocking to many. I have therefore in the following allusions given religious truth such a dress and mask as may perhaps procure it admittance to a conference with some of its opposers and contemners," He mentions also the example of our blessed Saviour, who gained an admission to the human heart by his parables. His allusions, however, he says, "cannot be understood without a competent knowledge of church history, and a near acquaintance with the present reigning controversies in religion; so that, as they are calculated for the perusal of the learned and judicious alone, it is not to be hoped they will please many." Yet I doubt if they ever proved as agreeable even to the learned and judicious reader, as the author expected. Their meaning is often too dark; the things to which they allude are not shewn with sufficient clearness. In compositions of this sort, which proceed wholly out of an author's own brain, it requires great art to make them palatable. Their intent is to expose the absurdities of Popery, and false principles of Arianism. Yet the dedication prefixed, which contains some admirable advice in very forcible language, is more worthy of being preserved than any of the allusions.

On leaving the tuition of lord Charlemont, he returned, as already mentioned, to his cure, which was kept open for

him by his indulgent rector, Mr. Hawkshaw, and he began to apply busily, as before, to reading and composition. While he was a curate, and engaged thus at close study, he was offered a school worth 500*l.* a year arising from the benefit of the scholars. But he refused it, as the acceptance of this office must have obstructed him in his literary progress. He had marked out for himself several useful compositions which he intended to publish, few or none of which could ever have been completed, had he embarked in the tumult of a public school. The noise and hurry of such a place are, it is well known, adverse to study, which requires silence, quiet, and calmness. How could we settle ourselves to composition, if a parcel of clamourous boys were vociferating around us?

I nunc et tecum versus meditare canoros.

It was remarked to him by some of his friends, that he might sit in a private room at his studies, and leave to his ushers the chief trouble of the school, which he might visit occasionally, as it would suit his convenience. But he said, he could not in conscience take the money, without giving up his whole time and attention to his scholars; which would prevent him from executing the plans he had formed.

About this time he was walking on the road near Monaghan, when a fine dressed servant came riding up to him, and asked him if he knew a Mr. Skelton? He said he had a right to know him a little for he was the man himself. The servant then gave him a letter he had for him, signed **** a lady of good fortune, who told him that her dear husband was just dead, and as she had more dependence on him than on any other man alive, she begged he would come to her family to teach her children for which she would allow him an ample salary, also sufficient leisure to pursue his studies. The offer appearing advantageous required some consideration. He therefore informed the lady by the servant, he would give her a positive answer in a day or two. The rest of the day he passed in anxious thought; at night he lay sleepless in his bed, without forming a fixed resolution; towards morning he fell into a doze, and saw clearly, he said, a vision which determined his choice.* He saw, he assured

* This is something of the marvellous, but I give it as I received it.

us, the appearance of a wig-block rising by degrees out of the floor of his room, which continued thus to rise till it got above the floor, and then moving back and forward, said in a solemn voice, " Beware of what you are about," and sunk gradually down. He was thus warned by the awful vision. Instantly he went to the lady, and told her he could not leave his cure. She expressed her sorrow at his determination, but requested he would look out for some one, who, he thought, would suit her purpose. He promised to do so, and in a short time brought her a gentleman every way qualified. When she saw him, she took Mr. Skelton aside, and told him, she had no objection to the gentleman but one; and that was, he was too handsome, which would probably cause ill-natured people to throw reflections on her character, as she was a young widow. She therefore requested he would get her some other one more ordinary. Accordingly he procured her one who answered her description. But, as Skelton remarked, " she married him in two years, in half a year after she cuckhold him, and then I saw her with my eyes a beastly drunkard." Thus the wig-block warned him of his danger.

In 1744, he published the " Candid Reader, addressed to his terraqueous Majesty, the World." This production is among the best of his short occasional pieces. In his attempts at wit he is tolerably successful. The objects of his ridicule are Hill the mathematician, who proposes making verses by an arithmetical table, lord Shaftesbury, and Mr. Johnson, the author of a play called Hurlothrumbo. The parallel he draws between the rhapsody of lord Shaftesbury and the Hurlothrumbo of Johnson appears somewhat pleasant and judicious.

In the same year, he also published " A Letter to the Authors of Divine Analogy and the minute Philosopher; from an old officer." This is a plain sensible letter. The veteran, in a military style, advises the two polemics to turn their arms from one another against the common enemies of the Christian faith.

The year 1745 was remarkable, it is well known, for an attempt made on the religion and liberty of these kingdoms. At this season of general commotion, Mr. Skelton published his short piece entitled, " Chevalier's Hopes." It is a bold

animated production, fraught with excellent advice; but, appears by its style to have been written in a hurry, as the times were too confused to afford leisure for a polished composition. It shews, that the Pretender had no real hope of success but one—the horrible wickedness of these kingdoms, which might justly bring down on them the divine vengeance.

The people, he said, in many parts of the north were possessed then with a terrible dread of the Highlanders, whom they expected every day to come over on them. At that time he told us, a doughty captain of militia and his men were parading and exercising on a rainy day to prepare for combat, and when they had finished their manœuvres, went to a public house to regale themselves, and dry their clothes, and were sitting at the fire burning their shins and boasting of what feats they would do, when the woman of the house, who happened to be out, opening the back door, shouted to her husband, "Johnny, Johnny, here are the Highlanders at the back door." On this the captain and his men all started up, and ran out of the other door in dread of their lives, leaving their arms behind them. They ran near a mile across the country, without looking back, until at last, hearing no shots, nor any one pursuing, they ventured to look back, and all was quiet. Their fears, it seems, put a wrong interpretation on the good woman's words. Her husband had lately got from the Highlanders, two Scotch ponies, which to distinguish them they called Highlanders. These having a few days before strayed to the adjacent mountains, could not be found until the rain brought them home; and the woman, rejoiced to see them, shouted to her husband, "Johnny, here are the Highlanders at the back door;" which the militia-men supposing to be the real Highlanders took to their heels to save themselves, and thus were frightened away by two Scotch ponies.

Bishop Sterne having about this time finished his earthly career, the see of Clogher was conferred on Dr. Clayton, the notorious author of the "Essay on Spirit." His lordship being a professed Arian in principle, it could not be expected that there would be a close coincidence of opinion between him and Mr. Skelton. Whenever they happened

to come into contact, they generally began to dispute. The bishop, as it may be supposed, always gave the first blow, and Skelton stood resolutely on the defensive. The polemic weapons were handled on both sides with sufficient skill; probably to the amusement of the by-standers. But the bishop in dignity of character and station had the advantage over poor Skelton, whose only dependence was upon the strength of his arguments. He told me, the bishop once made a speech to him a whole hour long against the Trinity, to which he was forced to listen with respectful attention. "I was then on the watch," he observed, "to see if I could catch hold of any thing the bishop said, for I knew I would not be allowed to speak five minutes in my turn, as I was but a poor curate." Accordingly, he perceived some flaw in the bishop's arguments, and when he had finished his oration, asked his lordship how he reconciled that with the rest of what he said, for he appeared to contradict himself? His lordship, who never suspected the weakness of his own reasoning, seemed startled at Skelton's objection; but when he pressed him, according to the Socratic mode, with the absurdity of his own arguments, his lordship was perplexed, and had nothing to say. Mr. Skelton told me all the particulars of this dispute with the bishop, which I cannot now recollect, but I know, I was convinced at the time, that Skelton had gained a complete victory. Yet, however honourable all this might be to Mr. Skelton, or consistent with his duty, it could not at all be conducive to his private interest. Every victory of this sort gained by a curate over a bishop, like that of Pyrrhus over the Romans, tends only to lessen his power, and may probably defeat him at last. The livings, as usual, were given away to others, and no notice taken of Skelton, who had then sufficiently distinguished himself by literature.

His constitution, he imagined, was impaired by the unlucky accident he met with at the long-bullets, and hence he became subject to hypochondriac complaints. Once, while curate of Monaghan, he was strangely affected by this malady. Mr. Hawkshaw and his lady going to Manor-water-house took him in their carriage along with him; but he had got only a short way on the road when he told him

that he was just on the point of death, and begged they would stop the carriage and let him out, that he might die in peace. He repeated his request three or four times without effect, for Mrs. Hawkshaw, who knew his little weakness, would not humour him in his notions. Her refusal, as it was expected, helped to cure him of his disorder, of which he got quite free before he arrived at the place appointed.* The most sensible men are liable to some infirmities, which shew, they are not exempt from the general lot of humanity.

He used to pay frequent visits to old Archdeacon Cranston, who lived near Monaghan, and generally walked to his house with a cudgel in his hand. One day, while he was thus equipped, he was attacked at the door by a huge mastiff, which he kept off with his cudgel after many attempts to seize him. This amused the old archdeacon and Mr. Hawkshaw, who were looking on at the diversion.

The old archdeacon was then far advanced in age. His death, it seems, had been often wished for, but this did him no harm; he lived, if possible, the longer on that account. Mr. Skelton said to him one day, "You have lived a long time, sir, in the diocess of Clogher, and I dare say you have seen many changes in it."—"Oh yes (he replied in a drawling voice), I have seen a great many changes in it; I remember about twenty years ago, the bishop of Clogher of that time had a fine young man a nephew, whom he wished to promote highly in his diocess, and had given one good living already, which it seems was not enough for him, for he was going to get him married to Squire Knox's daughter of Dungannon. Upon this he told the squire, that, beside the living he had, he would get my living, as I was just going to die; but you see I have long outlived the nephew, and his uncle the bishop too."—"Well sir," said Skelton, "would you be content to die now?"—"Why, if I could live till after the next crop would come in, for the sake of my friends, I would not care much." I then asked Mr. Skelton if he got the next crop? "Yes he did," he answered, "and another one too, and then he died."

He also went as often as convenient to see Mr. Pringle

* I was told this anecdote at Monaghan, but not by Mr. Hawkshaw.

of Caledon, about ten miles from Monaghan, where he spent his time very pleasantly. On his first coming there he had a curious adventure which deserves to be related. Mr. Pringle's father, who was then alive, being very old and doting, was unfit to manage his house, which was left to the direction of his son, who in fact was master of all. Consequently, he had a right to ask what company he thought proper. This gentleman invited Mr. Skelton to dine with him, and Archdeacon East, who had lately come to the parish, telling them that his father was doting, and not to be offended at any thing he said. When he introduced the archdeacon to his father, he said, "Father, this is archdeacon East, the clergyman of the parish, who has come to dine with us to-day."—"Ay ay," observed the old man, "come East, come West, come North, come South, you all come here to fill your bellies." When the dinner was brought in the old man refused to sit at the table with them, but took his seat in an adjoining room with the door quite open, where he watched them to see how much they would eat. Mr. Pringle placed Skelton just opposite the door, desiring him to eat voraciously, and take large mouthfuls. Accordingly he began to devour up the dinner as if he were starving, stuffing his mouth with huge lumps of meat and bread. The old man staring at him awhile, at last cried to his son, "Johnny, Johnny, see that fellow, he'll eat you up." Skelton then shouted out aloud to the servant, "give me a tumbler of wine," whispering to him to put some water in it. "Ah ah!" the old man cried, "a whole tumbler of wine, Johnny don't give it to him; where did you come from, sir, ?" After dinner Mr. Skelton brought him a glass of wine, and bowing presented it to him, which he snapt from him, and drank up most greedily. When he gave it to him again, he said, to him "What trade are you, sir ?"—"A gospeller," replied Skelton. "A gospeller, a gospeller, what trade's that ?"—"A preacher of the gospel." —"Ah man!" he said, "that's a brave trade, I thought you were a pedlar." In the evening a fine lady happened to be in company with him, who took great airs on her, but he soon said to her before a room full of people, "Madam, you are flaunting about now with your fine dress, and think yourself so great, but I remember your father a poor

servant in the country here." The old man, it seems, though he was doting, hit upon the truth.

Mr. Pringle in his will appointed Mr. Skelton executor to his children, an office which he discharged with great fidelity, as his son the present Mr. Pringle of Caledon assured me. I question if he ever committed, with his knowledge, a single act of injustice.

Some years after, a Mr. Clarke, who had married his brother Thomas's daughter, made him executor, leaving his fortune at his disposal. To the widow, who I believe, had no child, he gave as much as he thought just, and the rest to the Clarkes. This lady was afterward married to Mr. Ennis an attorney.

Lord Orrery, when he lived at Caledon-castle, often invited Mr. Skelton to come and see him. Once his lordship did him the honour to dine with him at his lodgings in Monaghan, a short time before he went to London to publish "Deism Revealed."

This was a work, he thought, of too great importance to be published in Ireland, and therefore he resolved to take it to London. Accordingly, his rector having offered to do duty for him in his absence, and pay him his salary, he set out for that metropolis (in 1748) to dispose of it. In this expedition he was accompanied by a Mr. Thompson, a clergyman.

Having taken Oxford in his way, he shewed his production to Dr. Connebear. This good man, who himself stood forth a strenuous supporter of our faith, after slightly looking over the manuscript, approved of it as far as he went. He then took down from his library the Essays of Mr. Hume, whose curious method of weighing evidences, as a small dealer does his ware, is so much admired by his ingenious disciples. "Have you seen these," he said, "that we lately published?" Mr. Skelton replied he had not; but on reading parts of them here and there, he remarked that he had anticipated answers to the chief of Mr. Hume's objections. However, in compliance with Dr. Connebear's desire, he introduced Hume's cavils about a balance, and answered them on the principles of common sense, which that gentleman, in his refinements, seems to have forgotten. It is still to be lamented, that the enemies of truth are often

superior to its friends in clearness of expression, and elegance of style, the chief requisites of an agreeable writer. The defenders of our holy religion, depending on the strength of their arguments, have sometimes paid too little attention to arrangement and perspicuity. Whereas the advocates for infidelity, who are destitute of solid arguments, endeavour to make amends for this defect, by the beauty of language, and allurements of eloquence, which, like the voice of the Syrens of old, are only designed to charm us to our ruin. "What's the reason, sir (I said to Mr. Skelton once) that these deistical writers, Hume, Bolingbroke, and Gibbon, are so clever, while their opponents, worthy good clergymen, are often inferior to them in point of composition?"—"Do you think," he replied, "the devil ever sent a fool on his errand?" He then remarked, that God Almighty often made use of weak instruments, like him, in the support of his religion, to shew, that with the most puny defenders, he could overcome all the strength of his enemies. "For the weakness of God is stronger than man."

Upon Mr. Skelton's arrival in London, he brought his manuscript to Andrew Millar the bookseller, to know if he would purchase it, and have it printed at his own expense. The bookseller desired him, as is usual, to leave it with him for a day or two, until he would get a certain gentleman of great abilities to examine it, who could judge if the sale would quit the cost of printing. These gentlemen who examine manuscripts, in the bookseller's cant, are called "triers." "Can you guess (he said to me) who this gentleman was, that tried my Deism Revealed."—"No, I "cannot."—"Hume the infidel." He came it seems to Andrew Millar's, took the manuscript to a room adjoining the shop, examined it here and there for about an hour, and then said to Andrew, print. By Deism Revealed he made about 200*l.* The bookseller allowed him for the manuscript a great many copies, which he disposed of himself among the citizens of London, with whom, on account of his preaching, he was highly famed. His powerful pulpit eloquence, which he displayed in their churches, brought him into notice. The citizens of London, to whom he afterward dedicated a volume of sermons, were, he said,

at that time excellent men, and admirable judges of preaching.

Mr. Thompson and he took lodgings at a noted coffee-house. He had an opportunity, he said, of making many observations on mankind, during his residence in that great city, which affords such an amazing variety of characters, and he found his understanding to increase daily by his conversation with people of good sense and knowledge of the world; whose observations made him discover many errors and deficiences in his Deism Revealed, which he took care to rectify and supply, passing after his arrival there, a great part of his time in altering and improving his book. He spoke always with a degree of rapture of the citizens of London, from whom he received many public and private civilities. He had a letter of credit, he told us, upon a great merchant there, who, without regarding it, though it was very good, gave him money on his own account, saying, "Sir, I am to take as many of your books as will nearly amount to all this."

One day he went to a jeweller's shop in London to look at some articles of great value, which he was commissioned to buy; and when he observed that he could not purchase them, till he should get an acquaintance of skill to examine them, the jeweller, though a stranger to him, bade him take them with him, for he had an honest face, and he was sure he would bring them back. This was a degree of confidence which an Irish visitant but rarely experiences in England.

He remarked, that the London merchants seldom had company at dinner, as their business prevented them from staying to enjoy the glass. But they made sufficient amends for this seeming parsimony by splendid and elegant suppers, furnished with every rarity and luxury. At these, he said, he passed many agreeable hours with company fit to entertain and instruct him. It was pleasant, he observed, to see merchants, many of whom had the whole, or at least the greater part of their property at sea, liable to the mercy of the winds and waves, relaxing themselves in private with as much ease and complacency, as if they had not a ship exposed to the fickle elements.

At one of these entertainments, he happened to meet

with the late Dr. Lowth, who was afterward raised for his learning to the bishoprick of London. Mr. Lowth was then, he said, a tall, thin, remarkably grave man. When he perceived Mr. Skelton was a clergyman from Ireland, he told him, he could have been highly promoted in the Irish church, but he refused it, as he did not wish to live in that country. "Well sir," replied Skelton, "there are good pickings in the Irish church, and some of your countrymen have no objections to come over and take a large share of them, to the great sorrow of us poor clergymen, natives of the land." Mr. Lowth, like every man of genius, was sensible of his own merits, which, he thought would raise him in the English church, where learning and abilities are respected and often rewarded. It was natural, therefore, as he had a choice, that he preferred promotion in his own country. Mr. Skelton had a high opinion of that learned and ingenius prelate, the late ornament of the English church. "Lowth on the Prophecies of Isaiah," he said, "is the best book in the world next to the Bible."

When he was in London, there was a man from the parish of Derriaghy, he assured us, that passed there for a wild Irishman, and was exhibited as a public show, dressed up with a false beard, artificial wings, and the like. Hundreds from all quarters flocked to see a strange spectacle, which they had often heard of before; and among others, a Derriaghy man, who happened to be in London, came in the crowd, and saw the wild Irishman, a hideous figure, with a chain about him, cutting his capers before a gaping multitude. Yet notwithstanding his disguise, he soon discovered, that this wild Irishman was a neighbour's son, a sober civilized young man, who had left Derriaghy a little before him. When the show was finished he went behind the scene, and cried out so as to be heard by his countryman, "Derriaghy, Derriaghy." Upon this the seeming wild Irishman, staring with surprise, spoke aloud, "I'll go any place for Derriaghy." They had then a private meeting, when he told him, that being destitute of money, he took that method of gulling the English, and succeeded far beyond his expectations.

Mr. Skelton, while in London, once attended the levee, dressed in his gown and band. The king, he said, being

unable to lift up his feet as he walked, was forced to sweep them along the floor. His majesty as he passed him, stopped awhile and looked in his face, which might be owing to his striking appearance. Some of his friends then whispered to him, "You are in the way of promotion, the king has you in his eye." Possibly his majesty in his reign promoted persons less worthy of the royal patronage than the great and good Mr. Skelton.

He spent a great part of his time in going through the city purchasing books at a cheap rate, and laid out on these most of the money which he got by Deism Revealed, and obtained a good library for a curate. The managers of a review offered, he said, at that time, to enrol him among their number, and give him a share of their profit, on condition of his staying in London. But he refused, for he thought an Irish curacy a more secure provision, than the precarious subsistence to be acquired by criticism.

He went, through curiosity, to a certain cheap place to get his dinner, which cost him three halfpence, for which he got a quart of thick soup and a piece of bread. The soup was made up of broken meat collected from cook-shops, kitchens, and strolling beggars. However he did not choose to try the experiment a second time. He told us of his cheap dinner when he was teaching a young man to live on little money in Dublin.

In London he continued about half a year, and then returned to his curacy in Ireland. At sea, I am told, he had a dangerous voyage; the vessel he sailed in being nearly lost. The newspapers indeed gave an account that it was wrecked, and that all on board perished. But it pleased God to preserve his life some time longer for the benefit of mankind.

The first edition of Deism Revealed, published by Andrew Millar, in 1749, was comprised in two tolerably large octavo volumes. It consists of eight dialogues; in the first seven there are four, and the eighth only two, speakers. At first three unbelievers attack one Christian, who at last makes a convert of one of them, a young gentleman of great fortune, but of good sense and candour. In these dialogues, the most of the infidel objections against the gospel are introduced with their whole force, and fully and can-

didly answered; so that the book is rather a complete answer to deistical cavils, than a regular proof of the divine authority of the gospel. But if their cavils are proved groundless, Christianity consequently is true.

The title of Deism Revealed shews it was intended to expose the craft of the infidels. In this book there is a great deal of good sense, sound argument, and original observation. It proves the author deeply read, and well acquainted with the subject of which he treats. But it is defective in point of arrangement; the matter is too loosely thrown together, the arguments do not follow each other in regular order. This remark, however, only applies to particular places. The style is also somewhat coarse; words are uselessly multiplied, and arguments drawn out beyond their proper bounds. The author in his attempts at wit, frequently fails; he is merry himself, but the reader unhappily cannot join with him in the joke. True wit subsists where the writer is grave, and the reader merry.

This book was in high repute on its first publication. A second edition was required in a little more than a year. Among others, Dr. Delany admired it, well pleased with the growing fame of his pupil, to whom he had proved himself so sincere a friend; and even now, there is scarce any man of reading in this country that has not at least heard of Deism Revealed. A few months after its publication, the bishop of Clogher happened to be in company with Dr. Sherlock, bishop of London; who asked him if he knew the author of this book? "O yes," he answered carelessly, "he has been a curate in my diocess, near these twenty years."—"More shame for your lordship," replied he, "to let a man of his merit continue so long a curate in your diocess."

The ingenious bishop of London sent a message once to inform Mr. Skelton, that he would promote him in his diocess, if he would write a book upon Christian morals. On which he desired the messenger to ask his lordship, what objection he had to the old Whole Duty of Man? To this question he never received any answer. The old Whole Duty of Man was one of his favourite books. The style, he said, was admirably qualified for instruction,

being so simple as to be easily understood by the most unlearned.

In 1749, he paid a visit to a distant northern bishop of great consequence, whose lady was what you may call, a learned woman, and had such influence over her husband as often to dispose of the livings to her own favourites; so that, as Mr. Skelton remarked, the lady was a sort of a bishop herself. She was on this account courted by the clergy, who humoured her in all her notions. She professed herself an admirer of Hutcheson's System of Moral Philosophy, and the clergy consequently approved of her taste. As she had a respect for Mr. Skelton's judgment, she took the following method to find out his opinion on this subject. Having lately got a new book written by one of Hutcheson's disciples, she ordered it to be put in the room in which he slept, naturally supposing he would examine it a little, and he did so. In the morning, an archdeacon, by the lady's directions, came to Skelton's room to sound him on the book, and asked him carelessly if he had read any of it? Yes, he told him, he had looked into it here and there. He then asked him how he liked it? He said but indifferently, for he thought there was a great deal of nonsense in it. This brought on a sort of dispute between them. At last Skelton said he would lay him a wager, that opening the book at any page he pleased, he would shew him nonsense in it before he read to the bottom. The archdeacon agreed; and while he was reading the page, Skelton stopped him now and then, and said, "that's nonsense;"—"yes, it is," he owned; and thus he was forced to acknowledge there was nonsense in every page of it. The bishop's lady, when she heard how contemptibly he spoke of the book which she so highly esteemed, could scarcely keep her temper; especially as she was accustomed to be flattered in her notions by the clergy, who would never oppose her. She therefore resolved to affront Mr. Skelton in an open company, supposing a poor curate like him dare not say a word. Accordingly, after dinner, before the bishop and a large company of clergy and others, she said to him, "Mr. Skelton, I heard you preached in St. James's chapel when you were in Lon-

don."—"Yes, madam, I did."—"Well, sir, a lady, a friend of mine, who heard you, told me you preached very absurdly, talking of hell's fire, and such coarse subjects, as are never introduced in so polite a place."—"Pray, madam, who is this lady, a friend of yours, that made these remarks on my preaching?"—"Such a lady, sir," she answered, naming her. "Oh!" he said, "she has a good right not to like sermons about hell's fire, for she is mistress to the archbishop of York, all London knows it."

This bishop, whose lady was so learned, having a niece unmarried, some people advised Mr. Skelton to court her and marry her, observing that he would get a good living by it; but they could not prevail on him to seek preferment from a connexion with that lady.

However, the time of his being promoted above the humble office of a curate at length arrived. In the year 1750, a large living fell in the diocess of Clogher; and immediately on the vacancy Dr. Delany, and another bishop waited on bishop Clayton, and told him, that if he did not give Skelton a living now, after disappointing them so often, they would take him out of his diocess. The bishop then gave him the living of Pettigo, in a wild part of the county of Donegal, having made many removals on purpose to put him in that savage place, among mountains, rocks, and heath. In the living of Pettigo he succeeded a Mr. Lindsay, who was removed to Enniskillen. When he had got this living he had been eighteen years curate of Monaghan, and two of Newtown-Butler, during which time he saw, as he told me, many illiterate boys put over his head, and highly preferred in the church without having served a cure.

The name of the parish is properly Templecarn; but as the church is placed in the small village of Pettigo, the people by custom call it the parish of Pettigo. This village is situate on the extremity of the counties of Donegal and Fermanagh; a little river that runs through it, over which a bridge is built, separates these counties from each other. It has a sort of a market on Mondays, and some stated fairs in the year. Even then there was probably some culture about this village, but the parts of the county

of Donegal adjacent, and to a great extent, in which Mr. Skelton's parish lay, were mostly wild, mountainous, and covered with heath. The parish of Pettigo is fifteen miles long, and ten broad; of this he had the whole tithes, and had a glebe of a hundred and fifty acres situated in the county of Fermanagh. Yet, strange as it may seem, tithe and glebe did not on an average produce 200*l.* a-year. Possibly he might have collected a little more, had he been rigid in demanding his dues; though it is allowed that scarce a fourth part of the parish was arable. One Robert Plunket, brother to the dissenting minister, came with him from Monaghan, and got a cabin in Pettigo, with some land adjacent. He appointed him his tithe-farmer, and also agreed with him for his diet and lodging.

The nature of the people was similar to that of the soil; they were rough, uncultivated, disorderly, fond of drinking and quarrelling. Mr. Skelton, by the account he heard of them, which, however, was greatly exaggerated, was really afraid they would kill him in that wild country, and therefore took with him from Monaghan, by way of servant, one Jonas Good, a great boxer, to defend him; a man of a decent family, who had a small freehold near that town, and yet consented to go with him through respect for his character. When he was agreeing with Jonas, he said to him, "I hire you to fight, at which I am told you are very clever." The man said he could do a little that way, that he had never served any one before but the king, but he would serve him too, he was so good a man. "Well, sir, you must fight bravely; when you see me laying down my hands, be sure do the same, then strike stoutly, and when I stop, stop you." The man promised he would do so. To make him look more terrible, he got him a good horse, and a military saddle with holsters, in which he put two large pistols, and equipped him suitably in other particulars; though he did not dress him in livery, but in plain grave clothes. All this made his appearance decent and formidable, for he was a large able-bodied man. In their travels he always rode before him to face the danger, and got all the bows, as the people mistook him for the master. Mr. Skelton gave it out through the country, to raise a terror of him,

that he could easily beat three or four men, which excited the envy of some malicious people, who way-laid Jonas at night, and beat him most shockingly.

His parishioners were sunk in profound ignorance. One could hardly have supposed, on viewing their manners, that they were born and bred in a Christian country. Yet many of them were nominally Protestants. Mr. Skelton declared, they scarce knew more of the gospel than the Indians of America; so that, he said, he was a missionary sent to convert them to Christianity. Like others in a rude state, their chief study was to supply their natural wants, and indulge their gross appetites. The most of them seemed ignorant of the use of books, which they thought very few applied to but for some bad purpose. Mr. Skelton assured me, that soon after he came to Pettigo, he was reading one evening in his room by candlelight, with the window shutters open, and heard many people whispering in the street at his window, which brought him to the door to see what was the matter, when he found a whole crowd of people listening and watching him; for it seems they thought he was a conjuror, he dealt so much in books. So true is the observation of Swift,

> Thus clowns on scholars as on wizards look,
> And take a folio for a conj'ring book.

Such were the people whom he was appointed to instruct. To a benevolent clergyman like him, it gave concern, to see them in this state of ignorance and error. He had a wide field for improvement before him, and began to work immediately. He visited them from house to house; he instructed them late and early; he told them of Jesus Christ who died for their sins, whose name some of them had scarcely heard of before. In his journeys through the parish he took down the children's names, desiring their parents to send them to church to be instructed in the catechism; and introduced the proof-catechism, such as he had already made use of at Monaghan. During the summer, while he was thus employed, he explained the catechism on Sundays before all the people, which served to edify both young and old. At this lecture or explanation he spent an hour and a half every Sunday the whole summer season. He gave the

people this instead of a sermon, as it seemed to please them better, being delivered without notes, and also remarkably plain and instructive. He was thus, like Job, eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. When he had reason to suppose that the grown-up people were tolerably acquainted with their duty, by means of his public and private lectures and admonitions, he locked the church doors on a Sunday, when he had a large congregation, and examined them all to see what progress they had made under his care in religious knowledge. He would not intimate to them the day he intended to do this, well knowing if he did, that few or none of them would come. He thus endeavoured to work upon their shame, which is often a more powerful motive with men than the dread of temporal or eternal evils. In time, by his extraordinary care, he brought these uncultivated people to believe in a God who made them, and a Saviour that redemed them.

Sir James Caldwell's residence being at the extremity of the parish, he preached once in the month, on a Sunday, in his parlour, where he had a tolerable congregation, and used also to examine the people there in religion. He was once examining some persons of quality there, when one of them told him there were two Gods, and another three Gods, and so on. Such was their ignorance. One of them indeed, who had nothing to say, every question he was asked, made a genteel bow, in which he was better instructed than in religion.

In Pettigo the greater number of the inhabitants were poor Catholics, living in wretched hovels, among barren rocks and heath; of whom there were many real objects of charity, that required the assistance of the humane. In such a place the benevolent disposition of Mr. Skelton found full room for exercise; and, I may safely say, that no human breast ever had more genuine charity than his. His wonderful acts of goodness will be remembered for ages in that remote corner of the North, and be transmitted from father to son for successive generations. But a particular display of them is reserved for its proper place.

On his first coming there, he made an agreement with his hearers to give as much in charity in the church, as the

whole collection on a Sunday should amount to. But when he perceived the people began to give less than what they used, he said to them, "farewell conjunction for the time to come; you are now falling short of what you gave at first, but you shall not confine my charity;" and then divided his own portion among the poor every month.

He also practised physic at Pettigo, as at Monaghan, and bestowed on his people medicines that he had procured for the purpose. His medicines and advice must have been indispensably requisite in a country so uncivilized, that such assistance could not be easily obtained. Yet in dangerous cases he would not depend on his own skill, but sent fourteen miles off to Enniskillen for his intimate friend Dr. Scott, to whom, for his trouble in attending his parishioners, he allowed, I am assured, rent-free, the whole glebe of the parish of Pettigo, already mentioned, which is now let for 40*l.* a year.

Soon after he got this living, the bishop of Clogher let him know by a message, that he expected he would preach the next visitation-sermon. Though he was unwilling, as some others, who were promoted before him, had not then preached, yet he promised to prepare himself for it. But his lordship had soon reason to suspect he would speak some disagreeable truths in his sermon, and make some sharp remarks on those clergymen who enjoy ecclesiastical emoluments though they disbelieve or oppose the principal doctrines contained in our articles. Consequently, as he was afraid, that some of the weapons which the preacher might dart from the pulpit would hit himself, he began to repent that he had offered to put him in a situation so convenient for him to make his attack upon others. His apprehension, increasing daily as the visitation approached, caused him to send to him a favourite clergyman, one happily of his own religious notions, to inform him that the bishop would not ask him to preach at the visitation. But having, in compliance with his lordship's desire, made a sermon for the purpose, he told the clergyman, that he had prepared his sermon, and that he would preach it at the visitation. The bishop, it may be supposed, did not interpose his authority, and therefore he preached his sermon entitled, the Dignity

of the Christian Ministry, at the visitation in 1751. This probably is one of the best sermons of this nature extant in our language. Its style is clear, forcible, animated with true piety. He makes in it a very proper distinction between the temporal dignity derived from the possession of worldly goods, and the spiritual dignity conferred by Jesus Christ upon the ministers of his gospel. To quote every excellent part in this sermon, would be indeed to quote the whole; and it is impossible to contract it, as it contains almost as many thoughts as words. The bishop himself, and all double-dealers in the church got a gentle rub as he passed; but he made no personal application. For any farther particulars the inquisitive reader is referred to the sermon itself.

The publication of the "Essay on Spirit," which made a great noise in the world, produced, as might be expected, some very severe answers. Mr. Skelton, who apprehended not without reason, that the bishop suspected him to be author of some of them, wrote him a letter (in 1752) assuring his lordship he was not. He used to say in private companies, that he would not write against the bishop, as he considered himself under obligations to him for the living of Pettigo. Yet his solemn asseverations were not sufficient to remove his lordship's scruples, who, notwithstanding, under pretence of being convinced by his letter, dined with him afterward in Pettigo.

The want of rational company added to the natural gloominess of the place. Pettigo, he called Siberia, and said he was banished from all civilized society. I heard him often declare, he was forced to ride seven miles before he could meet with a person of common sense to converse with. He found it necessary, in his own defence, to take frequent excursions to hear some rational conversation, and to get rid for a while of the illiterate people of Pettigo, whose barbarous language was constantly in his ears. Sir James Caldwell, Dr. Scott, Rev. Dr. Mac Donnel, Rev. Mr. Wallace, and some other clergy of the diocess of Clogher, were the persons he used generally to visit.

Plunket, with whom he lodged, could give him but one room with an earthen floor, where he slept and studied; in

which he had a screen or curtain so fixed that he could let it down upon occasions to conceal his bed. Here Sir James Caldwell, and other gentlemen of the country, have dined with him; for he was always fond of polished society. His chief meal at that time was his dinner, as he eat but little breakfast, and no supper; a sort of abstinence he found requisite to keep his passions in due order. He was for the same reason equally abstemious in sleep as in food; for he took but four hours sleep, and passed the rest of the night in prayer and meditation. Being at that time unhappily afflicted with religious melancholy, to which many good men are liable, he was seized with doubts about his salvation, and in the middle of the night often fell a crying, imagining he should be lost, he was so sinful a creature. While he was in these gloomy fits, he used to raise the man of the house out of his bed, and beg of him to awake the rest of the family, that he and they might pray with him, as he stood in need of all good Christians' prayers, his case was so desperate. I heard this from a lady who slept in a room adjoining his at the time. The poor man of the house strove to comfort him, telling him he was a pious charitable clergyman, and that there were few or none as good as he; so that he had no reason to have such scruples about his salvation. These gloomy notions were partly produced by his lonely sequestered life, for solitude is one of the parents of melancholy.

He also at that time, on the same account, often imagined that he was just on the point of death. One day he told his servant that his hour was approaching, and his thread of life spent, and desired him to get the horses ready, that he might go to Dr. Scott's and die there. The servant obeyed; but when he got a short way on the road, he began to whistle and sing, and said he was happy. The ride, it is to be supposed, helped to raise his spirits, an effect which it is often able to produce.

However, a ride had not always this happy effect on him. He rode to Dr. Scott's again when he had the same complaint. The doctor being then abroad, Mrs. Scott, on his appearing uneasy, offered to send for him: on which he began to hesitate; now he allowed her, then he refused; and continued in this wavering state until evening, when

he told her, he should die that night in her house. This dismal news frightened her so, that she could not sleep the whole night. She lay in a room adjoining his, and was always listening if she could hear him breathe, which he did stoutly and strongly. The doctor, who came home in the morning, on his inquiring into his case, would prescribe nothing to him but a glass of wine.

Once more he came to Dr. Scott's when he was similarly affected, accompanied by Robert Plunket with whom he lodged, and assured the doctor, as usual, he should die that night; but he cured him by a little wine, and company. In the morning he sent for a tailor to take his measure for a suit of clothes, when Plunket coming in observed, that he thought the undertaker would be taking his measure for a coffin. He told him he was growing better, but if he died the clothes would suit some one else.

Another time, while these attacks were upon him, and he was telling the people about him, that he was just going to die, one Robert Johnston of Pettigo who was present said to him, "Make a day, sir, and keep it, and don't be always disappointing us thus." This made him laugh, and shook off his disorder. It may be remarked, that all this tends to degrade the person whose life I write; but in my opinion it only shews, that he had his own peculiarities, to which great characters are in general more subject than ordinary men,

The private stills in the parish of Pettigo being at that time innumerable, made the whiskey cheap and plentiful, which caused the people to be addicted to drunkenness. The Catholics, who were most numerous, were chiefly remarkable for this; though the Protestants, were but little better. At burials, to which they flocked from all quarters, they drank most shamefully. It was the custom with them, as soon as the corpse was buried, to assemble in a field adjacent to the church-yard, and pour whiskey, like cold water, down their throats. Twenty gallons of strong whiskey have been often drunk at such a meeting. When their blood was sufficiently heated by the spirits, they then, as it was natural, fell a boxing with one another, even the near relations of the deceased. Many have been killed at such riotous meetings, either by quarrelling or drinking.

Mr. Skelton told a story that marks clearly the savage manners of the people. One of these Pettigo men came up to him one day with joy in his face, and said to him; "O! we had the finest drinking ever was two or three days ago; we were all drinking in a field after a burial, and we drank two or three kegs of strong whiskey. While we were drinking the last keg, a poor fellow (he said, mimicking him) who sat on the grass near me, fell down on his back, and then gave a shake or two with his hands and feet, and stirred no more. We looked at him, and found he was quite dead; then we took an empty keg, and clapt it on his breast, and shouted, we'd have another fine drinking bout at his burial. Then we waked him that night; and next day, at the burial, we drank strong whiskey, as much as before. So we had fine sport." The wild parts of Munster or Connaught could scarce exhibit such savage barbarity of manners.

Mr. Skelton strove with all his power to dissuade them from this brutish practice. Those he could prevail on he made swear against drinking, and in his church he preached against it. A sermon he preached to them on this subject is printed in his works, entitled, "Woe to the drunkard;" which, had they the feelings of common men, must have had an effect on them, especially when delivered by such a preacher as Mr. Skelton. Yet his advice and preaching produced in this instance but little reformation. Whiskey was plentiful, and the vice was established by long practice. It is almost impossible to make people lay aside at once customs of this sort, sanctioned by time, and pleasing to their appetites. The advance from barbarism to civility must, like every other improvement, be gradual. His own hearers were probably in some degree reclaimed by him from beastly drunkenness. He strove also to limit the expenses of all his people at christenings and marriages; for they usually spent all they could collect at these ceremonies, and afterward were nearly starving. I heard of a curious answer which an old woman of Pettigo made him, when he was just going to marry her to a young man. "What's the reason," he said to her, "you're doing this; 'tis for your penny of money he marries you, sure he hates you, for you're both old and ugly."

" Don't despise," she replied, " the Lord's handy work;" meaning herself.

He began himself indeed at that time to feel the want of a wife; not I believe from any unruly propensities towards the fair sex, for he was then bordering upon fifty; but he perceived, I should think, the use of having a gentle partner through life, as a partaker in his joys and sorrows, an assistant in sickness, and consoler in adversity. However, for some reasons or other he began then to repent, that he had not married when he was young, and used frequently to exclaim, " would to God I had married a servant maid!" It was reported then that he was jilted in his younger days, which gave him a distaste to marriage. This indeed is not improbable, as men of sense are as liable as any others to be deceived by the arts of women. Yet in my various and familiar conversations with him he never gave me a hint of this, which is a misfortune that men generally wish to keep to themselves.

He was very sensible of the obligation that lies on parents to take care of their offspring. A man who had a numerous family of children, being reduced to poverty by giving bail for another, came to him once to ask for assistance, setting forth his melancholy story. " What (he said to him) you have so many children, and yet you bailed a man; you ought not to have any, for you are not fit to take care of them." He then supplied him with present aid, and promised to settle five guineas a year on him, upon condition his wife should have no more children; observing, that one so careless as he ought not to enjoy conjugal gratifications.

His eminent virtues and charities gained him the love and respect of most of his people, and his courage, strength and activity, made him dreaded by those who could be only influenced by fear. Upon his arrived at Pettigo he found the people, as I mentioned before, rude and disorderly, fond of rioting and quarrelling. Among these there were bullies, who, ruling over the rest, wished also to bully Mr. Skelton, and keep him down; but they were mistaken in the man they had to deal with. He told me, that one of them called Acheson came into his room one day to insult him; but he fell on him, and turned him out of the house. This same

an came once into his church when he was drunk, and isturbed him so in his duty, that he was obliged to dis-iss the congregation.

It appears he had no objection at that time to try his rength upon occasions. Some people raising stones t Pettigo came to one too heavy for them; upon which kelton, who was present, told them they were a parcel of its, and taking the crow-iron in his hand raised the stone, ut broke the crow-iron in the experiment.

One Graham a farmer coming up to him one day in a arden, offered to wrestle with him. "What," said he, you insignificant little fellow, would you presume to restle with me?" He then took him by the collar, and irew him down among the keal.

His lonely situation at Pettigo gave him much leisure for tudy. In 1753, he published the "Consultation, or a Dia-gue of the Gods, in the manner of Lucian;" *sed magno iscrimine.* It is intended to ridicule the Arians, whom it epresents as a sort of polytheists; because they hold one upreme and other inferior gods. Jupiter of consequence nd his clan are fond of the Arians, who, they say, are their riends, and may be the means of bringing them once more nto fashion. His attempts at wit are certainly laudable, s employed in a good cause, but they are not so successful s I could wish.

In this or the following year he went to London again, to ublish his Discourses; the neighbouring clergy in his ab-ence attending his church, as I was assured by an old lergyman who preached there in his turn. This clergy-nan told me, that he copied over his discourses for the ress, an assistance he always made use of when he could btain it; for he disliked copying, which is but a servile mployment, especially, I suppose, as he was not very fair t it, if one may judge by his hand-writing in his letters. I ould hear of no adventure on this second visit to London worth relating. We may suppose indeed he returned as oon as convenient to his parish, which was so much the bject of his care.

In 1754, his two volumes of sermons were published by Andrew Millar, entitled "Discourses controversial and practical on various subjects, proper for the consideration

of the present times. By the author of Deism Revealed." To his first volume is prefixed a preface addressed to the clergy of the church of England, and to his second another addressed to the citizens of London. The corrupt and dangerous opinions that were then beginning to prevail he makes, in his first preface, his apology for publishing his controversial discourses. In his second, he expresses his gratitude to the citizens of London for their civilities to him, during the time he lived among them; and mentions, as I collect from his preface, that partly at the request of some of these, and partly to animate men, if possible, with some religious warmth, in this winter of Christianity, he offers his practical discourses to the public. To the preface of each volume he signs his name.

In these Discourses there is abundance of good sense and original thought. He is no servile copier of others, but draws his arguments from Scripture and his own understanding, his picture of human motives and actions from a close observation of mankind. He read few sermons, he said, that those he wrote might, if possible, be his own; and I believe but very few can be more justly than his styled the real property of their respective authors. Of these sermons I could quote many passages striking and sublime, produced at once by his own fertile capacity. For he took too little care in his compositions, and depended mostly on his genius, whence chiefly, arose all his faults. Hence the great inequality in his sermons: some of which are composed in a pure and elegant style, and others in one coarse and obscure. Yet there is scarce one of them that does not prove him to be a man of parts. It must also be observed, that they are all animated with a warm and genuine piety, and an ardent desire for the salvation of men's souls, which will be esteemed by a devout Christian an excellence sufficient to make amends for their defects.

These sermons were remarkable for their orthodoxy; some of them indeed were written on purpose to prove the Trinity and atonement; which he told us, gave offence to the reviewers, who were very sharp in their remarks on him, and called him an orthodox bully. They quoted him he said, very unfairly, for they took a piece of a sentence in one part, and another piece in another, and then patching

them up together, said, " this is nonsense." He then made an observation on reviewers, which it is not, I think, prudent to mention.

He told me, that soon after his Discourses were published, some one came into the present marquis of L——'s chambers at Oxford, where he was then a student, and saw Skelton's Discourses before him, which caused him to ask why he troubled himself with reading sermons, as he knew he was careless about any religion? He said, he happened to look into a sermon entitled the " Cunning Man," which engaged his attention a little, as the author was describing his father. Mr. Skelton said, he did not at that time know his father, who was a remarkably cunning man, and kept his son closely pinched at the university, which made him suppose that the character in the sermon alluded to him.

About two years after he came to Pettigo, Robert Plunket removed to a farm a mile distant from the village, whither Mr. Skelton accompanied him, and lodged with him two or three years more, until he and his family went to America to a brother, who had made a fortune on that continent. I was shewn in the garden a seat in a tree adjoining a murmuring brook, where Mr. Skelton used to read. He then took lodgings with one Carshore, a low farmer in the village of Pettigo. His situation here was even more inconvenient than at Plunket's. He had indeed wretched lodgings. The floor of the room was not only earthen, but also so uneven, that he was forced to get a table with two long and two short feet to fit it. He also found it necessary to buy a pair of tweezers, to pick the dirt out of the keal, which they served up to his dinner.

Some gentlemen who came to see him there, went out and killed a few woodcocks, which they desired the people of the house to roast for their dinner with the train in them, as is usual. A short time after, when he had company to dine with him, they served up to them a turkey-cock roasted with the entrails in it, which they imagined to be the most fashionable way. At length, he was obliged to send Carshore's daughter to Dr. Madden's, to get a little knowledge of cookery, which she stood much in need of.

Carshore had two sons, William and Thomas. William was born nearly blind; and in a few years after entirely

lost his sight by the measles. However, Mr. Skelton perceiving him to be a young man of extraordinary understanding, and surprisingly acquainted with the Scriptures, employed him to go through the parish during the winter, to instruct his people in religion, and in the summer he examined them himself, to know what benefit they had derived from his instruction. The most of the time I was at Pettigo I spent in his company, and found him to be one of the most rational and agreeable men I ever saw. The Methodists strove to bring him over to their opinions; for they always wish to deal with persons that have some natural defect, that the interposition of the Spirit may be more apparent; but he had too much good sense to become a convert to their notions.

His brother was by nature disabled in his limbs; he was reel-footed, as they call it; which signifies, that his feet were bent under him; in consequence of which he was unable to earn his bread by labour. Mr. Skelton, through pity, taught him to read and write, and also made him shave a wig-block in his room every day, giving him some curious directions, that he might thus learn to shave human faces, and earn his bread by it. He also sent him to Monaghan to learn the wig-making trade, and afterward to Armagh to learn to sing psalms; upon which occasions he defrayed all his expenses. He and his brother at present serve between them the office of clerk in the church of Pettigo.

When he lodged at Carshore's, he became extremely fond of flowers, and used to send twenty miles off to get a curious one. These were planted in Carshore's garden; every scarce flower having a paper affixed to it with its name. Those who are at a loss for company often seek for amusement from things inanimate. He used in cold weather to go through Pettigo with a straw rope about him, to keep his large coat on; being never very fond of finery; nor indeed was it requisite in that remote part of our island.

The course of my narrative leads me to one of the most conspicuous periods of his life. In 1757, a remarkable dearth prevailed in Ireland; the effects of which were felt most severely in the rough and barren lands of Pettigo.

Mr. Skelton went out into the country to discover the real state of his poor, and travelled from cottage to cottage over mountains, rocks, and heath. He was then a witness to many scenes of sorrow, to which the gay world were insensible, and which could be felt only by a soul so sympathetic as his. In one cabin he found the people eating boiled prushia* by itself for their breakfast, and tasted this sorry food which seemed nauseous to him. Next morning he gave orders to have prushia gathered and boiled for his own breakfast, that he might live on the same sort of food with the poor. He eat this for one or two days; but at last his stomach turning against it, he set off immediately for Ballyshannon to buy oatmeal for them, and brought thence with all speed as much as appeased the hunger of some of them. He also gave money to one Hanna to go through the parish, and distribute it among those who were in great distress. By this supply, some of the poor who were so weak with hunger that they could not rise out of their beds, in eight days grew so strong as to be able to get up.

When he had thus afforded them present relief, he went to Ballyhayes in the county of Cavan, and brought hence oatmeal which he could buy at a cheaper rate. He then set out through the country to see what subsistence the indigent people had in their wretched hovels, and used to look into the crocks and chests in which they kept their meal, and count their number of children, that he might be a better judge of their necessities. To some he gave one meck, to others more, according to their wants, and to those who could afford to pay a little he allowed meal at about half value. He thus, like his great Master, went about doing good.

One day, when he was travelling in this manner through the country, he came to a lonely cottage in the mountains, where he found a poor woman lying in child-bed with a number of children about her. All she had, in her weak helpless condition, to keep herself and her children alive, was blood and sorrel boiled up together. The blood, her husband, who was a herdsman, took from the cattle of others under his care, for he had none of his own. This was a usual sort of food in that country, in times of scarcity;

* A weed with a yellow flower that grows in corn-fields.

for they bled the cows for that purpose, and thus the same cow often afforded both milk and blood. Mr. Skelton tasted the odd mixture, the only cordial the poor woman had to strengthen her in her feeble state. His tender heart being touched at the sight, he went home immediately, and sent her a hundred of meal, a pound of brown sugar, and a bottle of brandy. He then visited her every second day in her cot among the mountains, bestowing on her such comforts as seemed requisite, until she recovered.

At that time, he and Jonas Good, the strong man, regulated Pettigo market on a Monday, standing among the meal-sacks, each of them with a huge club in his hand. They were obliged, when the carriers were bringing the meal to Pettigo, to guard it with their clubs, as the people of the adjacent parishes strove to take it by force, in which they sometimes succeeded, hunger making them desperate.

When he had procured some meal to supply the immediate wants of the necessitous, he sent off to Drogheda for flax, and having it carried to Pettigo, bestowed in greater or less quantities, according to the number of people in a family that could spin. The yarn thus made was sold every market-day, and the money it produced placed in his hands, as also the earnings of the men, in return for the meal and flax he gave them for the succeeding week; but these far exceeded in value the pittance the women could earn by spinning, or the men by labour. He thus made them contribute their industry to their own support. On those who were unable to work he bestowed meal sufficient for their subsistence; and with the money produced by the earnings of the people, and what he could collect himself, he bought more meal and flax, and thus daily strove to preserve them.

For some time he was tolerably successful; but at last his money was nearly all spent, and yet he knew the dearth must continue many weeks more, before the new crop would relieve the poor. He was then very apprehensive, lest, after keeping them alive so long, he should see them at last dying of hunger. This forced him to an expedient extremely afflicting to a scholar excluded, as he was, from all civilized society. He resolved to sell his books, the companions of his solitude, and relieve his indigent pa-

rishioners with the money. With this intent he sent them to Dublin, to William Watson, the bookseller in Capel-street, desiring him to dispose of them immediately; who, in compliance with his orders, advertised them for sale in the newspapers. But as buyers were tardy, and the wants of the poor very urgent, Mr. Watson bought them himself for 80*l.* and instantly paid the money. Soon after the advertisement appeared in the newspapers, two ladies, who guessed at his reason for selling his books, sent him a 50*l.* bill, requesting him to keep the books, and relieve his poor with the money. These ladies did not discover their names; but I am assured, that one of them was lady Barrymore, who gave 20*l.* and the other a Miss Leslie, who gave 30*l.* However, with expressions of gratitude he told them, he had dedicated his books to God, and he must sell them. Consequently, the contribution of the ladies, and the money he got for his books, were both applied to the relief of his poor. This was a sacrifice to duty of which no one can have an adequate idea, except a scholar, fond of reading, situated like Mr. Skelton, in a barren country, among illiterate people, with a number of agreeable books, the only companions of his many solitary hours.

Such were the exertions and extraordinary charities, of this exemplary clergyman, for the preservation of his poor parishioners. He was, indeed, like an angel sent down from heaven to visit them in their distress. A few such primitive apostolic Christians in this kingdom might almost be sufficient to avert the divine judgment, which God knows how soon may overtake us for our sins.

In the disposal of his charities, he made no distinction with respect to the religion of the persons, as the only claim they had to offer was poverty and want. Indeed he frequently declared, that during the several dearths in which he had the care of a parish, his charities were mostly conferred on Roman Catholics; for these, when they got a little money, spent it all profusely in drinking and carousing, without laying by a penny for any unforeseen accident, and consequently, in times of scarcity, would, many of them, have died of hunger, had they not been relieved. But Protestants of every description, being more economical, had

generally something saved, and of course, when a famine prevailed, stood in less need of assistance.

It is necessary to mention, that Mr. Watson sold a part of the books; those that remained, Mr. Skelton, when he could afford it, took from him at the price he sold them for, but insisted on paying interest for the sum they amounted to, for the time Mr. Watson had them in his possession.

He continued for a few years to lock the church door at intervals, while he examined the grown-up people in religion; but was at last forced to desist, as a woman fainted in the church, because she could not get out. However he did not on this account leave off examining them. It was a fashion with them to be going out and coming in, during the time of service, which obliged him at length to speak to them thus from the reading-desk, "remark the disturbers of God's worship." This rebuke partly cured them of the irregularity.

All his exertions were indeed scarce sufficient to keep his people in due order. Among their other bad practices, they used to steal timber from the adjoining woods. One man, who was notorious for this, he forced with much difficulty to swear to take no more in future. A hearer of his who, he was told, had taken a bundle of scollops and some timber out of Rapee-wood in the county of Fermanagh, kneeling one Sunday at the sacrament, had got the bread, and was just getting the wine, when looking in his face, he perceived who he was, and then stopped short, and said to him, "You have stolen a part of the Lord's sacrament, but you shall get no more." The man replied to him very sharply. However he was afterward reconciled to this man, and invited him to dine with him.

Doctor Clayton, the bishop of Clogher, was, it is well known, a strenuous opposer of the most essential doctrine of the orthodox faith. He declared his disbelief of some of the articles of our church to which he had solemnly subscribed; though he had no scruple of conscience to enjoy the ample revenue it afforded him. His lordship, it seems, was not content with the consciousness of having found out by his sagacity the right opinion himself, but, like some others of the same stamp, had a longing desire to make converts.

When he was putting down on paper his strange notions in his study, his lady used to come in, and say to him, "My lord, quit writing, or you'll lose your bishopric." But he would not be persuaded by her; the world was all wrong, he said, and he would strive to set it right. Accordingly, beside the Essay on Spirit, he published afterward some other pieces, in which he declared his sentiments too plainly on the subject of the Trinity. This gave occasion for an open attack on him in the House of Lords, when primate Stone made a very severe speech against him. The House resolving to deprive him of his bishopric, summoned him to appear before them. He then consulted a great lawyer on the subject, and asked him, if he thought he would lose his bishopric? "My lord," he answered, "I believe you will." "Sir;" he replied, "you have given me a stroke I shall never get the better of." His apprehensions were too true; for he was instantly seized with a disorder, and soon after died, in 1758.

A lady, who usually had a correspondence with Mr. Skelton, in a letter she wrote him from Dublin, mentioned, among other transactions, the bishop's death, and the probable cause of it. In his answer he lamented the bishop's fate, and thought his gentle spirit could not bear the severity he experienced, but that it broke his heart. The world knows how strenuous an advocate he was for those religious opinions that are exactly contrary to his lordship's; but his gratitude for the benefice he had conferred on him made him feel so sensibly for his fate. This bishop, with all his heretical notions, was a useful man to the poor. Being a member of the linen board, he got a great many wheels and reels for the poor about Clogher, and thus kept the most of them employed. He also had the honour of giving Mr. Skelton his first living, which, if he pleased, he might have refused to his dignified solicitors.

In the see of Clogher, he was succeeded by Dr. Garnet, a prelate of great humility, and a friend to literature and religion. This bishop, though he had but one eye, could discover, as I am told, men of merit, as well as some people with two eyes. Sensible that Mr. Skelton was a man of worth and parts, he treated him with the respect such men deserve. A superior, who treats a man of learning and

abilities with coldness and indifference, shews he has no regard for literature.

About this time a pamphlet appeared in Dublin entitled "An appeal to the Common Sense of all Christian People." This being an artful defence of the Arian opinions, which the author insinuated were alone consistent with common sense, was written with so much cunning, and such a shew of candour, that it had a dangerous effect on many well-meaning people. An answer was published to it in about half a year, consisting of above two hundred duodecimo pages, which was ascribed to Mr. Skelton. It is really a masterly performance, and exceeding in style and manner any of his former compositions, completely overturns, at least in my opinion, the author's objections, and proves the doctrine of the Trinity from the very texts he quotes against it. This piece is not contained in the five volumes of his works published in 1770. But as the appeal had sunk into obscurity, it was probably thought needless to republish the answer.

In the parish of Pettigo, about three miles from the little village, is Lough-Derg, so much famed over Europe for the holy exercises performed by the pious pilgrims that resort to it. From the 12th of May, till the latter end of August, the village is crowded with pilgrims, either going, or returning from that place; and the public houses of Pettigo get many a good sum from these spiritual visitants, who are sufficiently liberal in spending their money on whiskey. Mr. Skelton wrote a description of Lough-Derg, so remarkable for its surprising qualities, in a letter to the bishop of Clogher, which made its way into the newspapers without a name; but he afterward thought fit to claim it as his property, and publish it in his works. It is needless to be more particular about a place that has so often employed the pen of the curious.

A poor blind man, called Petty, who lost both his eyes by boxing, had a cabin just adjoining Lough-Derg, and usually got a halfpenny out of sixpence-halfpenny Irish given by every pilgrim, or stationer, for the boat which carried them over to the island. On a complaint made against him to the titular bishop and prior, his cabin was thrown down, and himself banished. When the bishop

came to Lough-Derg, Mr. Skelton invited him to dine with him, and got Petty restored, who continued there to the year 1786, when he died. A priest, who was also turned out, by his means got his place again. Such was his interest with the titular bishop.

In 1759, the bishop of Clogher, without any solicitation, removed him from Pettigo to Devenish, a living in the county of Fermanagh, near Enniskillen, worth about three hundred a year. Thus, by the kindness of the good bishop, he was brought once more into civilized society, after continuing ten years in that rugged part of Ireland, where his virtues and charities deserve to be long remembered.* When he was leaving Pettigo, he said to the poor, "Give me your blessing now before I go, and God's blessing be with you. When you are in great distress, come to me, and I'll strive to relieve you." He used to say, "I want nothing but as much as will keep a pair of horses and a servant."†

He was fond of a good horse, and generally had the best saddle horses that could be got, though he was remarkably awkward on horseback. For he turned out his toes, and took no hold with his knees, but balanced himself in the stirrups, like a man on slack-wire; so that when the horse began to trot, he jogged up and down like a taylor. A lady, who was riding along with him one day, near Pettigo, observed to him, that he turned out his toes too much, "O yes," he said, "my education was inverted, for I was taught to ride by a dancing-master, and to dance by a riding-master." Horace himself informs us very candidly, that he rode awkwardly on his mule.

It has been mentioned, that old Mr. Leslie, his father, as he called him, who died while he had the living of Pettigo, recommended his grandchildren to him on his death-bed. He assured him he would be a father to them, and proved himself to be so, for, among his other virtues, he possessed, in a high degree, gratitude and veracity. A lady once asked him, if he had as reported, kept the Rev. Alexander Leslie, a grandson of this clergyman, while a school-boy, at Monaghan school? He acknowledged to her he had

* It must, however, be owned, in justice to the people of that country, that they seem at present very much improved in every particular.

† Jonas Good, the famous man, already mentioned, quitted his service on obtaining a farm at Pettigo, in which his widow and children lived after his decease.

partly. When Mr. Leslie's sister was left a widow with a large family, he sent her 50*l.*

Once he gave 30*l.* as an apprentice fee with a young man who was no way connected with him except by being his godson.

As the living of Devenish lay near Enniskillen, he boarded and lodged in that town, with his physician and friend Dr. Scott; where he had an agreeable and rational society, which must have been doubly pleasing to him, after nine years exile in the desert wilds of Pettigo. The doctor and he used to sit up pretty late in the winter nights playing at piquet, of which he was very fond; but he seldom played higher than a farthing a game.

The whole living was then divided in two parts, placed at some miles distance from each other. The part that lay to the north of Lough-Ern was called Monea, that to the south of it Trory.* In the former was the parish church, and in the latter a chapel of ease. He usually preached in the chapel of ease, as it was only two miles distant from Enniskillen, and kept a curate, in the parish church. However, he frequently changed places with his curate, extending his care over the people in every part of his parish. In both churches there was a large congregation, as is the case over the whole county of Fermanagh, where the church of England men exceed the Presbyterians in the proportion of at least three to one. This is very unusual in the north of Ireland, where Presbyterians so much abound. In these churches Mr. Skelton had the sacrament administered once a month; a regulation which he thought fit to make on account of the number of hearers.

His endeavours to instruct his people both in public and private were as strenuous now as before. The children he catechised, as usual, in the proof-catechism, and lectured on these occasions. The grown up people he also examined in the church. At Trory he had a great many persons of quality, whom he examined as well as the rest, but he was greatly afraid they should miss any thing, for he wished to set them up as examples for the others to imitate. On this account he asked them always the easiest questions imaginable; yet they often did not hit on the

* This part of the living is now made a perpetual cure.

right answers. When he was going to examine one of these he used to say to the rest of the people, "I only ask this gentleman a question to shew you I make no distinction, for I am sure he is very well acquainted with his duty." One day he asked a man of fortune in his church how many commandments there were? and he answered nine: on which it was observed, that he forgot the seventh, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," as he was apt to stray from his wife.

The situation of his parish, which adjoined Lough-Ern, made his attention to the morals of his people more requisite. In the Lough, it is well known, there are near four hundred little islands. These swarmed at that time with private stills, which, as being out of the reach of the revenue officers, made the whiskey too plentiful, and in proportion the morals of the people were depraved. It therefore required all his attention to counteract the corrupt influence of the place. Government have now, I am told, appointed a barge with officers and men to seize on these private stills, which are so injurious to good morals.

In 1763, Mr. Skelton, with the rest of the established clergy, was forced to make his escape to Dublin from the Oak-boys, who were then persecuting the church; all his virtues not being able to protect him from those enemies to religion. He thought it prudent to take a circular way, that he might thus elude the search of the villains who pursued him; and stayed in Dublin till he could return to his parish with safety.

At that time, I think he found at the bishop of Clogher's, to whom he paid a visit, a grave clergyman, an author, who boasted to him that he had written a large English grammar with one pen; which he thought a great feat; and probably he had more merit in this, than in writing the book. He then said, that he lately intended to write a translation of Suetonius, but was puzzled in the very first sentence, and forced to desist. The literary world has reason to lament the loss!

While Mr. Skelton was in Dublin, the Oak-boys seized on Arthur Johnston Esq. of Enniskillen, a gentleman of a stiff temper, worth 500*l.* a year. They then ordered him to swear to be true to their cause, and so on; but he refused

obstinately; on which they put a rope about his neck, and were on the point of hanging him, when one Simpson, a supernumerary gauger, who afterward got a commission in the army, bursting in on them with a pistol, rescued him out of their hands. Skelton, on his return, met Mr. Johnston in the streets of Enniskillen, and putting his hand in his pocket, took out a shilling, and gave it to him, saying, "Here, take this; I gave a shilling to see a camel in Dublin, but an honest man is a greater wonder in the county of Fermanagh."

To a gentleman, who told him once he expected to represent that county in parliament, he said, "Aye, they are all a parcel of rascals, and a rascal is the fittest to represent them." These expressions of resentment proceeded from a temporary dislike, probably occasioned by his imagining them somewhat favourable to the Oak-boys. Yet if I could judge by my own little experience of them, I should give them a very different character.

A Mr. C. of the same county invited him to spend a fortnight at his house; but when he was there a day or two, his servant came and told him, he could get no oats for the horses. This he thought a hint to him, that his company could be dispensed with; so he prepared immediately. When he was just going away, Mr. C. said to him, "I am surprised you would leave me so soon, after promising to stay a fortnight with me."—"Sir," he replied, "you have fed myself, but you starved my horses." He thus freely spoke his mind.

No hopes of private advantage could prevail on him to vary a tittle from the truth. Having a fine mare at Enniskillen, which happened once to fall under him, he resolved to part with her, and on a fair day in that town, sent her out with a servant to sell her, and soon followed himself, accompanied by Dr. Scott, who told me the anecdote. When any one who wished to buy her, asked him, "What sort of a mare is this?" he answered, "She is a very bad mare, she fell under me;" then he told all her faults, and many more imaginary ones. The people, of course, when he gave her so bad a character, went off without offering any thing. At last a Mr. Galbraith of Omagh, who came up to him, and heard the same bad account of her, said to him,

"Well, what will you take for her with all her faults?"—"Why, I don't doubt but she may be worth eight guineas for drawing the car, but she is not fit to ride."—"'Tis a bargain," said the other, and gave him the money immediately. But in a week after he sold the same mare for 26*l*. This shews Mr. Skelton was but a bad jockey, as these gentry make it a rule not to be so scrupulous in telling all the faults of the horses they wish to sell. It is a maxim of the present days, I understand, that a man may be honest in every thing else, but a rogue about horses. By these and many other instances it appears, that Mr. Skelton was void of hypocrisy, a quality which has often helped to insinuate ecclesiastics into favour.

A gentleman of great consequence near Enniskillen, who often invited him to his house, but was still disappointed of seeing him there, at last pressed to know his reason for it; "To be plain with you, sir," he answered, "you are too great a man for me to be acquainted with."

Being informed one evening while he was in Dr. Scott's, that a methodist preacher was declaiming in the streets with the usual violence, he kindly invited the preacher to drink tea with him after preaching. The man came accompanied by all his followers, who pushed after him into the parlour, to hear Mr. Skelton and him arguing. "What commission, sir," said Skelton, "have you to preach the gospel?"—"A commission from above;" replied the preacher. "By whom were you ordained?"—"By the Spirit," he answered. "Well sir, suppose you have got the Spirit, as you say, it is still necessary you should be ordained by the laying on of hands, before you attempt to preach; for you read in the Acts of the Apostles, 'The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.' These, it is allowed, had already got the Spirit; but they were not permitted to go abroad to preach, till they were first ordained by the laying on of hands. Hence your preaching, without being ordained, is contrary to the practice of the apostles." The man being confounded by this objection, made his escape as fast as possible.

When he was arguing again with a methodist preacher,

he said to him, "Do you advise Presbyterians to go to meeting, and church-people to go to church?"—"Yes."—"Well then," said he, "your religion is not the same as St. Paul's; for he says, 'Be ye all of one mind one with another.'"

Once a year he went to Lisburn to see his relations, when he generally took with him sixty guineas, which he divided among them. In Derriaghy, there is a handsome rural place called the Big Glen, near Collin Mountain, which has been so often celebrated in poetry, where he used every summer to give his friends a treat on the grass, and spend one day with them in innocent relaxation.

Returning once from Lisburn, with his hat tied over his face, he met with his tithe-farmer near Enniskillen, and lifting up the brim of his hat, he saw him, and said, "Is this you, George Irwin?"—"Yes," replied George. "Can you give me a guinea?"—"I can."—"Can you give me a shilling?"—"I can."—"O then," he said, "I'm as rich as a Jew, I'm as rich as a Jew."

Derriaghy, the place of his birth, belongs, it is well known, to the earl of Hertford. Before that nobleman obtained the government of this kingdom, he used frequently to say, as Mr. Skelton told me, that it was a shame for the lord-lieutenants of Ireland not to make Skelton a bishop. It was reasonable then to suppose, that these sentiments should operate with his lordship, if an opportunity offered of putting them in practice. Consequently, when he came over to us as lord-lieutenant, in the year 1765, Skelton probably expected to be raised by him to that high office, for which, from his virtues and abilities, he was so eminently qualified. But he was disappointed in his hopes, if he had any.

On former occasions, when his lordship paid a visit to Ireland, he used to send for Mr. Skelton, but, I believe, neglected to do it then. However, soon after his arrival, he passed a few days with him at lord Loftus's in the county of Fermanagh, where his excellency spent some time shooting woodcocks. Skelton then remarked to him, that he was happy to find a lord-lieutenant that could govern the kingdom and shoot woodcocks. On this occasion, he asked him what sort of a living he had? "A very good living, a

very good living, please your excellency, much better than I deserve." Few clergymen would return such an answer to such a question from a lord-lieutenant; for the most of them think they have nothing equal to their merits.

In the disposal of his ecclesiastical preferments, his excellency took no notice of Mr. Skelton, which might be owing to his declaring himself content with his condition; for he might suppose, there was no occasion to heap favours on a man who did not seem to desire them, especially, when so many were anxious to snatch at them. However, Mr. Skelton mentioned to me another reason for the neglect he then met with, which I am forced to omit, lest I should give offence to persons of eminence, which one in my station should carefully avoid. In justice, however, to lord H. I must own, that he gave his brother Richard's son a commission in the army at his request. The young man was soon obliged to go out on half-pay; but when he was preparing to join the regiment again, he caught a fever and died.

His brother Richard had a daughter, who was married to one Magee; but after some time she parted from her husband, who appears not to have been without his faults. Mr. Skelton laid down rules for his niece to observe with respect to her husband, but she would not observe them. He sent her ten guineas, in 1780, on condition she would go and live with him, but she refused: he then ordered the money to be given to one of his relations at Dundalk. When any of his poor relations came to see him, he told them freely, they wanted to get something from him.

His charities, while he continued at Devenish, were as extraordinary as before. They were even, if possible, more extensive, in proportion to the increase of his living. He was the same attentive friend to the poor, the same reliever of their distress and assuager of their pain. But a particular account of these would be too similar to that which I have already given. It is necessary only to observe, that his memory is there also held in high esteem.

In 1766,* the bishop of Clogher promoted him again to

* In his Senilia he says he was at Fintona about 1765, but I was assured there that he came to it in 1766. In his fifth volume he informs us, that he got the hurt at the long-bullets when he was twenty-one years of age; but in his Senilia he says

the living of Fintona, in the county of Tyrone, worth at least a hundred a year more than that of Devenish. Neither Mr. Skelton, nor any one for him, asked the bishop for this or the other living; so that a regard for his merit was the sole principle that induced his lordship to bestow these benefices successively upon him. Such a bishop was indeed an honour to the station he filled, and a blessing to the clergy who had the good fortune to be under him.

When Mr. Skelton visited his lordship on his promotion, he said to him, "My lord, I return you thanks for your kindness to me, and for putting so worthy a person in my room; but I know, the chief pleasure you enjoy is in being able to do good."—"I am glad, Skelton," said the bishop, "I have done what is agreeable to you."—"But, my lord," he continued, "you are only a puppet in the hands of God Almighty. God sent one of the royal family to the university in England where you were a professor, that you might please him, and be raised high in the church. Then God Almighty, using him as an instrument, sent you over to Ireland, and made you bishop of Ferns, and at length raised you to the see of Clogher, where you have great power and many livings to bestow, and a horrible account you must give hereafter of the manner you dispose of them. Thus God sent you over to us to do good, and to promote worthy men. He sent you also, my lord, to promote me, who, I hope, will not shame you before him and the world. You see now, my lord, you are only a puppet in the hands of God Almighty."—"You're right Skelton, you're right Skelton," replied the good bishop.

When he got the living of Fintona, he was just fifty-nine years of age. "God Almighty," he used to say, "was very kind to me: when I began to advance in years, and stood in need of a horse and servant, he gave me a living. Then he gave me two livings one after another, each of which was at least worth a hundred a year more than the preceding. I have therefore been rewarded by him, even in this world, far above my deserts." Such was his humility.

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he got it when he was twenty. In his sixth volume he tells us, his works were published in 1777; but the works themselves inform us they were published in 1770. Hence it appears, that through inadvertance, or defect of memory, he was liable to mistakes with respect to times and dates.

Fintona is a market-town in the county of Tyrone, five miles distant from Omagh. The proper name of the parish is Donacavey, but as Fintona is the market-town, the parish by custom, as before observed of Pettigo, assumes that name. It is six miles square, and though of a coarse soil, was even then tolerably well cultivated. It also has two hundred acres of glebe; seventy of which lie near the town, but the rest are mountainous, and consequently of little value. A third part of the parish is tithe-free, which made the living, though so large, and with such a glebe, worth scarcely 500*l.* a year. He received but 400*l.* neat, as the curate's salary, which was at least 60*l.* and the expense of collecting tithe, consumed the other 100*l.* Possibly he could have made more of it, had he been rigid in requiring his dues. There is a market in Fintona every Friday, and also some stated fairs in the year, when they usually have violent quarrels. The 22d of June is a remarkably quarrelling fair. But they were then even more furious quarrellers than at present, as the private stills were more numerous, and of course the people more disorderly. In this town he at first boarded and lodged with one Buchanan.

Upon entering on the care of this parish, he perceived that he had but few hearers, the most of the people being Roman Catholics and Presbyterians. In the town of Fintona, in particular, they were almost all Presbyterians, but in a short time he brought over nearly the whole of these to the established church; which was no easy task, considering the firmness with which they usually adhere to their opinions of nonconformity.

A clergyman, with whom he lodged awhile, assured me he told him, that when he found, on first coming to one of his parishes, that his Protestant parishioners were mostly Dissenters, he used the following stratagem to entice them to come to church. Having invited their minister to dine with him, he asked his leave to preach in his meeting-house on the next Sunday, though he owned he could not with safety allow him to preach in his church. The man gave his consent; but his people were so pleased with Mr. Skelton, that the greater number of them quitted their own teacher, and came afterward to hear him. He then sent for him, and asked him how much he lost by the desertion of

his hearers? He told him 40*l.* a year; on which he settled that sum annually on him and paid it out of his own pocket.

His practice of physic at Fintona was at least equally expensive to him; for his bestowing medicines on the poor, and prescribing to the people *gratis*, as at Pettigo, made Dr. Gromly, the physician of the place, complain, that by his means he lost a great part of his business; which caused him to settle 40*l.* a year on him. In both these instances he not only took on him the toil of doing good, but also voluntarily paid for doing it.

At Fintona he made converts of a few Roman Catholics, as also at all his other parishes. At Devenish in particular, one Ann Develin, of that persuasion, being converted by hearing his awful lectures to a sick woman on her death bed, renounced the Popish religion; which caused her to suffer harsh usage from her own family, who vainly strove by all means to bring her back to Popery.

About the time he was advanced to his last preferment, he received a letter from the present earl of Bristol, before he got his bishopric, informing him, that as he expected soon to be raised to a station of some eminence in the Irish church, he hoped then to be able to prove the high opinion he entertained for the "author of Deism Revealed." Accordingly, in 1767, upon his obtaining the bishopric of Cloyne, his lordship sent him another letter to this effect, that having some time before made a sort of an engagement with him, he begged leave now to fulfil it, and therefore requested him to come up to Dublin and preach his consecration sermon, assuring him that, upon his compliance, he would promote him in the church as high as he was able. Skelton, in his answer, informed his lordship, he would comply with his request, though he was content with the living he had; and if he would consent to go to the diocess of Cloyne, it would be only to be nearer the sun, and nearer his lordship. He then prepared a sermon for the occasion; but when the day approached, finding himself somewhat unwell, and the weather very cold, he thought he could not with safety go to Dublin, and of course the bishop was disappointed. However, he sent his lordship the sermon, who, though astonished at the ability it displayed, was still offended with

Mr. Skelton, as he imagined his excuse for his absence was not sufficient. Upon this, he informed him by letter, that the chain of their friendship was broken in two; to which Mr. Skelton replied, that if it were broken, it was of his lordship's own forging, not of his. Yet the bishop, after his promotion to the see of Derry, came to Fintona to pay him a visit (when he happened to be abroad), and desired a young gentleman who was in his lodgings to inform him that he had come fifteen miles out of his road to see him. Of this visit Mr. Skelton, it seems, took no notice. It was unfortunate that the disappointment of the sermon produced such a disagreement between them; for otherwise his lordship, in all probability, would have promotod him highly in his diocess, as, it is well known, he was a liberal encouager of literature.

His brother John, of Dundalk, died this year. I have heard it mentioned to his credit, that he would not, like some others, use his influence over the landlord, to take fields from the poor people to suit his own convenience. His brother Thomas, of Newry, died some time before; for whom he had such an affection that he wore ever after, as mourning for him, a blue coat with black cuffs.

When he obtained the living of Fintona, he seemed to have arrived at the height of his wishes. He had no ambitious notions: he wished to do good here, in hopes of obtaining heaven hereafter. In no human breast was there ever a more settled contempt for the vain pomp of all sublunary things. A gentleman mentioned him once with respect to lord Townshend, during his lieutenancy, adding that he was content with what he had; on which his excellency observed, that he must be a very extraordinary man, and he should be glad to be acquainted with him; for he never knew any one in all his life content with what he had. Another gentleman of consequence, intimately acquainted with this nobleman, offered to introduce him to his excellency; but he refused, assuring him, he did not wish for any higher preferment in the church. Besides, he knew he was not qualified to pay that humble attendance at court requisite to gain the favour of a great man in power.

His people at Fintona being but little acquainted with religion, though well accustomed to whiskey and quarrel-

ling, he found it necessary, first to visit every house in his parish, and then collect to a particular place the people of each town-land that he might instruct them more conveniently. When he had thus gone round them himself, he afterward called to his assistance blind Carshore of Pettigo, who spent the whole winter among them teaching them religion, for which he was paid by him. In summer he catechised the children in church as usual, bestowing on them Bibles, or "Week's-Preparations," according to their answers, or the distance they came, and he accompanied his examination with lectures on the catechism, introducing in them some of the most notorious bad deeds done in the parish the week before. Thus he strove to shame them out of their vices, and also out of their ignorance, by publicly examining, as usual, the grown-up people in the church.

One Sunday, some time after he came to Fintona, when he was examining them in the church, he came up to a woman, and asked her how many commandments there were? She answered, seven. He told her there were ten, and asked her what was the first? This was too hard for her, and when she was stammering about it, one John Patterson, a tailor, behind her, whispered to her, "Thou shalt have no other gods but me."—"Do you hear, sir," quoth she, "what Johnny Patterson, a tailor body here says to me? he says, I shall have no other god but him: Deel in hell take such gods." This is an instance of the ignorance of the people.

He was examining once an old gentleman, called John Hamilton, who could not answer him a word. When he found he said nothing, he thought he was deaf, and said, "Ah! poor man, he's deaf."—"Oh! indeed I am," he replied.

Though his people had himself, his curate, and blind Carshore to instruct them, they were still very far from being perfect; and therefore he thought it requisite to appoint as an additional instructor, one Armstrong, a miller of Tonagh, near Fintona, whom he supposed to be a very sober and discreet man. To him he gave the charge of his neighbours, to keep them in due order, telling him, he expected, he would give a good account of them. Soon after this, he met Armstrong drunk in Fintona, on a market-day, and said,

"Oh! Oh! Mr. Armstrong, is this the man I have trusted the care of my people to?"—"Why, I am a better man than you are," he replied. "How can that be?"—"I'll tell you: the people you gave into my charge, I have all safe and sound; but there are you, the priest, and your curate, and you have let the devil take a man from among the middle of you." "How so?" said Skelton. "Sure," he answered, "Dick Saggerton, you know, a day or two ago, cut his throat in the town with you, and the devil has carried him off in spite of you all." This, it seems, was really the case.

The irregularity of his people required every exertion. Their heads, it appears, were too often disordered, and their manners corrupted, by whiskey, which was too plentiful by means of the private stills.

One day he met a carpenter drunk, who was repairing the church, and checked him for his drunkenness, and neglecting the business he was employed about; he then said, the people of Fintona were all beggars, yet they were still drinking. "Sir," replied the man, "Solomon gives us liberty to drink, for he says, 'Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.'* You see then poor people should drink to keep up their spirits."

He saw a mill grinding malt for whiskey on a Sunday, and in his lecture took notice of it, as usual, saying, "We have malt on this side, and malt on that side. Ah! my poor parishioners loose their souls by it; the distillers are the cause of this, who are hanging by the tongue in hell."—"Sure he lies" (one of them who was drunk in church said to another one beside him), "for you're not there, and I'm not there."

Another Sunday he carried off a parcel of boys' clothes who were stripped and playing ball.

In his own conduct he always set an example of strict piety and morality. Besides his private prayers, which were at least twice a day, he had family prayers every evening, to which he summoned the people of the town by the ringing of a hand-bell.

His neighbours frequently resorted to his lodgings, being

* Prov. xxxi. 6, 7.

amused and instructed by his agreeable conversation. With some of them he used to play cards after dinner, to keep himself awake, for he was apt to slumber at that time.

Having a few of his parishioners with him one evening at his lodgings, he happened to fall asleep; and then, while one of them blowed his nose very violently with his handkerchief, another one plucked the handkerchief smartly, so as to make the noise very shrill. This instantly awakened Mr. Skelton, who said, "What, you're blowing a trumpet in my room to insult me;" and then starting up, he said he would beat them, and turned them out of the room. However, he received them again into favour, on their humbly begging to be reconciled to him, for they did not wish to fall out with him, his company being so agreeable.

It may be supposed, that even before he got the living of Fintona, he had improved, as much as possible, his extraordinary talent for preaching. When he preached charity sermons in Dublin, as he often did, he always brought thither a crowded audience. It was remarked, that on these occasions he generally got more for the poor than any one else, and well might he enjoin charity to others, who set such a noble example of that virtue in himself. His manner in the pulpit was unusually vehement, suitable to the warmth of his feelings. Some degree of vehemence in a preacher is absolutely requisite in the present days, when mankind are so careless about religion; indeed it requires no ordinary skill to make an audience listen for twenty minutes with tolerable attention. He never made use of spectacles in the pulpit, not even in his old age; in which he justly consulted the feelings of his audience: for surely it is disgusting to see a preacher mount the pulpit, and clap a pair of spectacles on his nose, to drawl out his dull lecture to his drowsy people. When he turns up his eyes off the paper, and looks at us through the spectacles which we see glittering on his nose, his appearance for an orator is really burlesque. To avoid all this, Mr. Skelton first made his own sermons, so that he had a great part of them already in his head; and next he had them copied in a large fair hand, which a young man could read at three yards distance. Consequently, in his very advanced age he could easily read them without spectacles. He generally hired a servant who could write a

tolerable hand to copy, at leisure hours, his sermons and other writings, in which he always improved by practice. Surely our beneficed clergy could at least afford to do this; and then they would no longer contribute by their spectacles to set their congregations asleep; to which indeed they are sufficiently inclined of themselves.

Being in Lisneskea church one Sunday, where the rector spoke in a lows queaking voice, he remarked to him after dinner, before some others, "Sir, you speak in company loud enough, but you squeak so in church, that we can't know a word you say."

In Fintona church he took down the pulpit, and in its place raised the reading-desk to such a height, as to serve both for reading desk and pulpit. This gave him more room for action, with which, as already mentioned, he always set off his sermons.

In 1770, he published his works by subscription, in five volumes octavo, for the benefit of the Magdalen charity. The first volume contains Deism Revealed, the second and third, the sermons he published in England, the fourth, an additional volume of sermons never published before. To these four volumes he prefixed a dedication addressed to lady Arabella Denny, the illustrious patroness of the charity above-mentioned, dated Fintona, June 7, 1770. The fifth volume, which consists of miscellanies, he dedicates to the Rev. Dr. Henry Clarke, who had some time been his tutor in the university. These five volumes were printed by William Watson of Capel-street, and obtained for the charity 500*l.*

The additional volume of sermons he preferred to the others, as his understanding was more mature when he wrote them. His sermon on these words, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light," I have always admired for its just observations on mankind.

In the fifth volume, there are a few pieces not published before, of which it may be necessary to take notice.

First; Reasons for Inoculation; in which he mentions, that, some time before he wrote this little piece, seven children, on an average, died each day of the small-pox at Lisburn.

Second; An account of a well or pool near Clonis in the county of Monaghan, famous for curing the jaundice. The cure he supposes not owing to the virtue of the waters, but to the mode of application.

Third; Observations on a late Resignation. It alludes to the conduct of the Rev. Mr. Robertson, late of the established church, a short account of whom may not be unnecessary. He had the benefice of Rathvilly, in the diocess of Leighlin and Ferns; but as he could not believe in the Trinity, he resigned it through a scruple of conscience. On his resignation, he published his reasons entitled "An Inquiry," &c. which Mr. Skelton thought a book very agreeably written. He then wrote to Mr. Robertson, requesting he would come and spend the remainder of his life with him, and take part of what he had; if not, he offered him a large share of his income to support him. In his letter to him he said, "We should often argue, but never dispute; if we could not concur in one creed, we should at least coalesce in one heart," Such were his proposals to a man whose religious opinions differed so widely from his own. But Mr. Robertson nobly refused, and preferred retiring to a country part of England, where he kept a school for his bread. They were intimate ever after, and continued a regular correspondence with each other. When he sent his grandson afterward to our university, he committed him chiefly to the care of Mr. Skelton, who would not allow him, on urgent occasions, to be in want of money. This was a man that, without any pompous display of principle, quietly resigned a good living for conscience' sake. Skelton assured me that Mr. Lindsey, who made such a parade about his honesty, was not influenced by motives as pure as his, as the society which he established in London brought him more yearly than the vicarage he resigned.

Fourth; A dream. This is intended to expose the folly of fashion. In imagination it is not deficient; but it is too long, and its style stiff and affected. It requires no ordinary skill to make fiction appear pleasant.

Fifth; Hilema. By this he means a copse, or shrubbery. It consists of a variety of short observations, some of which, if written in an easy style, would be agreeable. There are also in it a few anecdotes well worth reading.

His good friend the bishop of Clogher coming to visit him at Fintona this year, arrived at his lodgings on a Sunday morning, when he had his hat on in his room, and was just ready to go to church. The bishop, it was observed, on entering, took off his hat, but he kept his on. Yet no one had a higher respect than he for his worthy patron, though he might not strictly observe every little ceremony.

At Fintona, this year, there were some remarkable events. One or two persons killed themselves; others were murdered; one man in particular was murdered in the street opposite to his window; which had such an effect on him, that he instantly made his escape from the place in dread of his life, imagining, if he stayed, that he also should be murdered. He durst not venture back again for three months, it was so long before he could shake off his apprehensions.

The county of Tyrone, he said, was remarkable for many murders, the perpetrators of which generally escaped unpunished. However, it has at last been thought expedient to punish them. In April 1788, I saw three of their heads fixed on Omagh jail for a barbarous murder lately committed.

It is to be hoped, for the honour of humanity, that Mr. Skelton was in no real danger of his life at Fintona; for they must have been worse than savages, had they attempted to injure a man, who was constantly doing good among them. Even in plentiful times he gave nearly the half of his income to the poor; or should he any year happen not to give so much, he only reserved his money to be more liberal to them at a season of scarcity. At the division of the poor's-money every Easter, he always joined to the whole collection 20 or 30*l.* of his own. Besides, he very often put a guinea in the poor-box, and seldom less than a crown. He also gave money to buy flax-seed to those who stood in need of it. Indeed he was constantly dividing his charities, either publicly or privately, among the necessitous. Yet in the distribution of these, he was scarcely ever imposed on by improper objects, he examined so strictly into the condition of those he relieved. To the strolling beggars he was not, I must own, very liberal, for he suspected the most of them to be impostors. In one of his pieces he says, "of all nuisances and grievances incident to poor Ireland, strolling beggars are the worst."

His strict and rigid economy enabled him to give so much away. His curate, who lodged many years in the same house with him, told me, he often saw him sitting up in his bed in the morning mending his breeches. He had a trash bag, as they call it, in which he kept needles, thread, and such-like articles, to put a few stitches, if necessary, in his clothes.

Yet he was obliged at last, on account of his age and infirmities, to be at the expense of buying a chaise, which, as he got it, not for show, but convenience, was very plain. He used to say he would put asses to his chaise, if he could get any, that he might, in this at least, bear some resemblance to his great Master.

About 1773, there was a dearth in that part of Ireland, at which time, as usual, he kept his poor alive by his own money and the assistance he got from others. The land about Fintona was tolerably fertile; but persons bought up the oatmeal, and carried it off to the barren parts of the county of Derry and Antrim, which made the dearth be felt more severely at Fintona. It was therefore requisite at that time to bring meal thither from other places; but this was attended with some difficulty, as the people of the adjacent parishes, who were in a manner starving, strove to take the meal by force from the carmen. Consequently, the people of Fintona found it necessary to arm themselves and go in a body to meet the carmen, and conduct them to the town.

About this time he left Buchanan's, and went to board and lodge with James West, a shopkeeper, in whose house Mr. Eccles, the squire of his parish, lodged along with him some time, and they lived very agreeably together, as Mr. Eccles, who is a gentleman of real piety, was fond of religious conversation. He was indeed so remarkable for this, that Mr. Skelton used often to say, he had too much religion for a gentleman. However, we need not be apprehensive that others of his station will catch the infection.

Mr. Eccles had a brother a clergyman, the Rev. Charles Stewart Eccles, who offered to preach in Fintona church, but Mr. Skelton refused him leave, as he suspected him to be a Methodist; and seemingly with good reason, for he preached publicly in the conventicles of those religionists. *However*, they had a friendly communication at Mr. Skel-

ton's lodgings, and stayed in a room together a whole week, all which time he spent examining into Mr. Charles Eccles's principles, and was at length convinced, that, strictly speaking, he was not a Methodist. He then allowed him to preach in his church. Two parts out of three of the whole parish belong to Mr. Eccles, yet he would not allow his brother to preach in his church, till he was convinced he was not tinctured with false principles.

Mr. Eccles told me, that his brother had been in Georgia, where he was head of the college of Savanna. While he was there, he and another clergyman went among the Indians to convert them to Christianity; but their preaching was unhappily not successful. In one town, in particular, the savages chased them away with stones; on which they shook the dust of their feet as a judgment against them. In a day or two after they heard, (strange to tell!) that another body of Indians came on them, and destroyed the town, and put them all to death. This indeed was a signal event.

This clergymen met with his death (in 1780) in the following manner. While he was studying a sermon near the banks of a river in England, he saw a boy just drowning in the river; upon this, he ran to it, and leaping in to save him, was drowned in striving to preserve his life.

It appears, Mr. Skelton was not partial to the Methodists. A few years after he came to Fintona, some of his people began to adopt their religious notions. A man who had lately turned Methodist, coming somewhat late into church on a Sunday, while he was walking up the aisle, was thus addressed by Skelton, "I suppose, Sir, you have not come to hear me, till you had dismissed your own congregation; but you do not come here to be instructed; it is only to make your remarks." At that time he preached against the Methodists on this text, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

One Brown, a Methodist preacher, rebuked him at Fintona for playing cards. He pleaded as an excuse for himself, that he only played for a farthing a game; but the man still insisted it was a heinous sin. When the Methodists told him, they could live without sin (a doctrine peculiar to their sect), he said to them, "Ah, you are very different from me, for I am sinning every hour." "He that exalteth

himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

In his private conversation with Mr. Eccles, he remarked, that if men preached the gospel now with the same dispositions as the apostles, miracles would follow. Again he said to him, "Between you and me, I'll pawn my salvation on the truth of the Trinity." He once declared to me, that he would resign his living, if the Athanasian Creed were removed from the prayer-book; and I am sure he would have done so. Few, I suppose, of the established clergy were so sincerely attached to it.

It has been mentioned, that he always kept a curate at Fintona. Mr. Hawkshaw's son was curate to him a short while, until he got a living. About 1773, Mr. Auchinleck became his curate. Upon his getting the cure, he gave him grass for his horse in the glebe, and desired him to lodge with him in James West's, when he told him, he might give 20*l.* a year for his diet and lodging, &c. and he would pay the rest with which he should be charged out of his own pocket. But this gentleman imagined Mr. Skelton would have to pay too much, and therefore declined accepting for some time of his kind offer, until he made, what he thought, a more reasonable agreement with Mr. West. He then went to lodge in the same house with Mr. Skelton, who insisted on giving him share of his own wine after dinner, and also on paying for whatever company Mr. Auchinleck chose to invite to dine with him. He considered, he said, all these as his own guests, and therefore would pay for them. For the cure he gave him 60*l.* a year, while he resided at Fintona, and seventy afterward. He also allowed him advantages from the management of his tithe, and let him a part of the glebe at a low rent when he removed to Dublin.

Being often, on a vacancy, appointed sequestrator to a living, he always raised the curate's salary from 40 to 50*l.* This he did at Rossery, where he was sequestrator, when he had Devenish.

To the poor curates indeed he was always a sincere friend, as also to all others, whose condition made them stand in need of his assistance. While he had Fintona, he went once to recommend to a certain eminent prelate,

an old curate who was remarkable for his morals, learning, and abilities. After some conversation, he told his grace he had come to him on business. "What business?" his grace quickly replied. "I am come," he answered, "to recommend to your grace, Mr. Johnston, an old curate of great merit in your diocess, who will soon die, and it is a shame he should die a curate. I beg, therefore, you may give him a small living." "He is an odd sort of man," his grace said, and then gave him a refusal. On which Mr. Skelton spoke to him thus: "I agree with your grace, he is a very odd sort of a man, for he has more learning, and knows better how to apply it, than the whole diocess ***."

Some dignified clergy at the bishop of Clogher's were remarking one day before dinner, that Skelton himself was an odd sort of a man, mentioning the oddity of his dress, and the like. "Aye, aye," observed the old bishop, "Mr. Skelton may wear a rusty gown, and a brown wig, but he is such a jewel, that we should overlook his little peculiarities."

The bishop of Clogher wrote him once a letter to Fintona, to inform him, that the same eminent prelate, just now mentioned, would be at his house on such a day, and said, he expected he would come and wait on him. Immediately he returned an answer to this effect, "That if his lordship desired him to come to him on the most frivolous occasion, he would obey; but as for the other (naming him) he was out of his books, and he would not turn his heel where his toe was to pay him a compliment." Of this illustrious person he also remarked, that he was very careful to build churches, but did not care what sort of clergymen he put in them.

At Drogheda, he was told once, that the same eminent prelate would be there the next day. Upon which he hastened immediately out of the town, declaring he would not see him or speak to him, as he neglected his old curates. In the recital of these anecdotes I have observed all the delicacy in my power, but it is not, I think, the duty of a biographer to conceal the truth.

In 1771, he went to live, during the winter, with his nephew, Dr. Skelton, in Drogheda, and continued to stay there in winters, till about 1774, when he parted from him on an

imaginary insult. He had written a letter to the Rev. Dr. King in Dublin, inviting him and his two sisters to spend some time with him in Drogheda. This letter lying with another on his table, sealed, but not directed, he by mistake directed the wrong letter to Dr. King, and his to the other person. When he did not get an answer from the doctor at the usual time, he imagined, that his nephew, by his wife's directions, had detained the letter, and having on this account, treated him and Mrs. Skelton, a lady of great gentleness and goodness, somewhat roughly, he hastened away from the house; nor was he afterward, which was very odd, sufficiently reconciled to his nephew, though he found out the mistake.

To this mistake indeed he was sometimes subject. Dr. Scott told me, he received a letter from him at Enniskillen from Dublin, which was intended for the Rev. Mr. English in the county of Armagh, who of course got his letter.

His portmanteau was stolen from him once at an inn in Drogheda, in which he had some sermons, and other curious articles which he valued very much. But the villains, I dare say, expected something more substantial in it than sermons, or the like: otherwise, they would not so easily have snatched it away, for such fellows are easy about divinity.

The air of Fintona being now too keen for him in winter, he was at that season forced to go to a place more suitable to his constitution. In 1775, he went to lodge in Dublin with William Watson, the bookseller, where he stayed two or three winters. As yet he returned to Fintona before Easter Sunday, when he began his lectures on the catechism, which continued sixteen weeks.

Even in his old age he preserved some remains of his juvenile strength. Two fellows were boxing at an inn at Fintona, and he happened to see them; on which he ran in between them, to part them, which he accomplished with difficulty; this vexed him and made him say, "O, if I were as strong as when I was young, I could easily master you both." When he got them asunder, he held them at arm's length, and said, "Now you dogs, spit your venom at each other."

He was always angry at any one who shewed himself

cowardly, and once gave a woman half a crown for beating a man who strove to take a child from her.

While he lodged with William Watson, he preached a sermon at St. Andrew's, on Friday, December 13, 1776, being the day appointed for a general fast and humiliation. Some time before, the rector of that parish waiting on him, requested him to preach on the ensuing fast; he pleaded his age and infirmities as his excuse, but desired the rector to block out a sermon himself, and he would correct it. Accordingly, a few days before the day appointed, he brought him the sermon which he had made to have it corrected by him. But on examining it, he found it would be easier for him, as he told me, to make a new sermon of his own, than to correct his nonsense, and therefore bade him take his sermon home with him, and he would preach himself. His appearance on that day was suitable to the occasion. His wig was quite brown, it had not even the colour of powder in it; his gown was old and rusty, his face furrowed with wrinkles, and venerable by age; his person tall, though somewhat bent by years. In fact he bore a resemblance to one in mourning, commissioned to remind the world of the judgments of God brought on them for their sins. In the pulpit, old as he was, he displayed his usual vehemence; he spoke with abhorrence of the corruptions and infidelity of the age; he seemed to retain his wonted eloquence, and had an astonishing effect upon his hearers.

After service, Mr. Skelton, the rector of the parish, and some more clergymen, were sitting in the vestry, when the rector, who wore a very fine powdered wig, said to him by way of compliment, "I wish I could exchange heads with you;" "Would you," said Skelton, "wig and all?" This raised a loud laugh.

The sermon, at the desire of the parishioners, and many clergymen who were present, was published for the benefit of the charity schools of the parish. It is an animated composition, but displays evident marks of hurry.

The regular series of events conducts me to another conspicuous period of his life. At Fintona there was no trade or manufacture but that of yarn, from the sale of which, and of some oatmeal after a plentiful harvest, they

derived the little money they possessed. Their mode of subsistence was therefore very precarious, of which the poor in that place were made too sensible about 1778, when they were in a very distressed state. The yarn for a year before had been remarkably cheap, and the provisions for three years constantly rising in price. Hence he perceived a famine must ensue, and was anxious to provide against this calamity. But he was scarce ever so ill prepared for it as then, for with difficulty he had collected, on account of the general distress, even a small part of his parochial income; all of which, except what barely afforded him subsistence, he had already given away to the poor, their necessities being so urgent. When his money was all gone, he still saw their wants and the price of provisions increasing daily to an alarming degree. This forced him, about the beginning of spring, in compassion to their unhappy state, to borrow 64*l.* to buy oatmeal for them; which sum, being sent to Drogheda for that purpose, produced but four ton of meal including the expense of carriage; a supply that was sufficient for some months to relieve those poor that stood most in need of it. But in time this charitable donation began to fail, while the necessities and the number of indigent were daily increasing. He was then obliged, as the last resource, to write a circular letter, setting forth their distresses, a copy of which he sent to each of those gentlemen who had landed property in the parish. Of this letter I obtained a copy at Fintona, and thus got some satisfactory intelligence respecting the dearth. He tells them of the afflictions of the poor, through the cheapness of the yarn, and the growing price of provisions, which had now produced a famine; "that this famine, which was in a manner general through Europe, was attended in his parish by two epidemic distempers, the smallpox, and a purple fever, that raged with great violence; that from one or other of these scarce a family was free; so that in many houses, out of seven or eight inhabitants, there was not one able to attend the rest, or to search the fields, or ditches, for sorrel and nettles, to relieve a perishing parent or child; that some months before he had borrowed 64*l.* to buy meal for them, all of which was almost expended now, though the dearth had not as yet arrived at

its height; that he had no other prospect but of a broken heart, nor his numerous poor any hope of redress but in death, unless the gentlemen who had estates in the parish would lend their aid; that the tenants on his glebe, and his tithe-farmers owed him more than would be sufficient to preserve his poor, but should he attempt to force payment, he would do it in vain, or increase instead of mitigating the calamity."

This letter had the desired effect. To each of the gentlemen he appointed their quota, in proportion to their quantity of land in the parish. The portion assigned Sir George Saville, who had 200*l.* a year in it, was 2*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*; which sum he thought so moderate, that he ordered his agent to give it annually to the poor of Fintona during his life. Mr. Eccles, his squire, and Miss Ecklin, of Stephen's Green, gave the most.

A great part of this money he laid out immediately on oatmeal, which was bought in Drogheda, and conveyed by carmen to Fintona in certain quantities as necessary. On Friday, which was the market-day, he determined to divide it among the poor. Part of it he intended to give away, and part to sell at a lower rate. The former was placed in the parlour of his own lodgings; the latter in the street. On the first day of the division, having dressed himself in his gown and band, he asked Mr. Eccles, who was present, if he had a fine suit of clothes, who told him he had, and put on a suit of green and gold. Thus equipped they both walked out into the street, when the poor, anxious for food, gathered about them in crowds. Mr. Skelton then spoke to them thus: "My good people, don't despair; after all the meal we bought, we have still money remaining. You see Mr. Eccles here ready to help you; the rest of the gentlemen of property have also contributed, and I your minister, as usual, will assist you. Those that have money will get meal for three-pence a peck lower than the market price, and those that have no money will get it for nothing; but the poor that have no money must be served first."

During that summer, from May to September, he distributed gratis among his indigent parishioners a hundred and twenty-five pecks of meal every week. In this account the meal sold at a low rate, which was far more, is not included.

For, at that time there were on the poor's list from a hundred and sixty to two hundred, all of whom used to assemble on the market-day in the street opposite his parlour window. When he was ready to divide the meal, he put his head out of the window, and shouted to them, "Come all of you and get your shares." Then each of them was handed his share out of the window.

A decent-looking woman, he told me, came to him one day to his lodgings, and falling down on her knees, declared that she and her family were starving; but she was ashamed to take meal with the rest, having never been accustomed to ask charity before. Moved by her tender tale, he relieved her privately, and kept her alive.

One poor man, a Roman Catholic, to whom he offered meal, refused to take any of it, saying he had a lock of potatoes at home which would keep him from starving, and bade him give the meal to those who had more need for it. It is rare to meet with such an instance of self-denial even among those who pretend to finer feelings than this poor illiterate man.

The meal being once all spent before a fresh supply arrived from Drogheda, Mr. Skelton was just sitting down to his breakfast on a Friday morning, when he asked the people he lodged with, if the meal had come from Drogheda for the poor? They answered, "No."—"What, you thieves," said he, "will I feed myself while my poor are starving?" and he sent off immediately before he would eat a morsel himself, and bought as much meal at a dear rate as was sufficient for that day's division.

Having some suspicions that both meal and money would fail before the dearth ended, he starved himself, I may say, of the common necessaries of life, to buy more meal for those in need. As a substitute for snuff, which was also very dear, he made use of a sort of snuff of heath, which he had manufactured on that occasion, and also pinched himself of food, eating only a little veal every day for his dinner, as much as was barely sufficient to subsist on. The most indulgent father could not have the welfare of his family nearer his heart, than Mr. Skelton had that of his people. He used to say triumphantly, "They all came through, and none of them starved."

At this season of calamity, the lady of Mr. Knox, for-

merly a pupil of his at Monaghan, who was then deputy secretary of state, sent over money to his poor. Upon which he and his congregation publicly prayed for her and her husband. It is to be supposed, that they were not unmindful in their prayers of the rest of their benefactors.

In this year, or in the one immediately before or after, he sold his books, which consisted of seven hundred volumes, for 100*l.*,* to his intimate friend Dr. Woodward, dean of Clogher, who is now the well-known bishop of Cloyne; a prelate whose arguments are able to convince, and his eloquence to please and reform. The defect of his faculties, which made him unfit to take care of them, was his ostensible reason for parting with them; but the real cause of it was, that he wanted money to give to his poor, and the year after he bestowed on them 60*l.* Some books that the doctor did not choose to take he gave to his curate Mr. Auchinleck.

In hard times he made a present of half-a-year's rent to his poor tenants on the glebe, and, if absent, wrote to his tithe-farmer to give each of them a receipt for that sum.

In times of moderate plenty, he used to distribute money among indigent housekeepers, who strove to preserve a decent appearance. James West, with whom he lodged, often conducted him by his own desire to the dwellings of such, that he himself might examine into their state. Yet he at last made it a point not to give any thing away in charity in any house where he was called upon to visit a sick person; having been deceived by some pretending to be sick that they might get money from him. He was once sent for to visit a sick woman, but when he came near the house, he saw her running hastily in, that she might get into bed before he came.

It might be mentioned here, that Miss Ecklin of Stephen's Green, who was always so liberal to his poor, in the spring of 1788, bestowed on her poor tenants of Fintona 30*l.* to buy flax-seed, which with her is a usual donation.

In 1778, he went up to Dublin in his chaise, and drove on to St. Mary's church, where Mr. Jameson one of the

* At Fintona they assured me he got but 100*l.* for them, though I thought he told me he got more.

curates happened to be at prayers. After prayers he said to him, "you must take me in, I am come to lodge with you." Mr. Jameson told him it would be very inconvenient for him, as his house was too small, and so on. But Mr. Skelton still insisting, he was forced to submit. He lived there some time very happily, until one night when he went early to bed, there was a good deal of smoke in the house, which caused them to open the windows in the story above him to let out the smoke. This it seems disturbed him, and made him suppose they rattled the windows on purpose to make the house disagreeable to him. Next morning he told them his mind, and would not be convinced by their account of the smoke, but left the house immediately, nor could they prevail on him to come back to lodge with them again.

On the ensuing summer he returned to Fintona; but as he was then on the point of leaving it entirely, it may not be improper to introduce here a few more particulars of his conduct while there.

He not only assisted his poor by his charities, but also strove to promote his decent parishioners' children, if they got a suitable education. He told me, he wrote a whole quire of paper in letters, striving to get ordained a widow's son in Fintona, who was educated in the university of Edinburgh; and at last effected it by the kindness of his friend the late dean of Down. For this young gentleman, who was worthy of every attention, he soon obtained a very beneficial cure, under a clergyman* who, in point of character and fortune, was one of the most respectable persons in our church.

There was one Joseph Moore, a miller's son, at Fintona, whom he discovered to be a boy of great genius, and therefore sent him at his own expense to the school of Enniskillen, where he lived in the house with Dr. Scott, and afterward had him entered in our university; but he died before he had completed his education, having but a tender constitution.

Dr. Gormley, the physician of Fintona, dying in very low circumstances, left behind him a helpless family of daughters. Mr. Skelton, who was always a friend to the

* Dr. Leslie of Tandernagee.

distressed, took the poor orphans under his care, and supported them till he put them in a way of supporting themselves. Those of them that were of an age fit for it, he recommended for waiting-maids to ladies of fortune. One of them lived in that capacity with Miss Brooke, who afterward informed him by letter, that the girl, who was bred a Catholic, had voluntarily conformed to the Protestant religion; which intelligence, it may be supposed, was very agreeable to him; though he had always, through a principle of delicacy, avoided speaking to her on the subject of her religion, lest he might appear to use his influence on her in so nice a point, where one should be directed, not by complaisance, but conscience. One of these came to see him in Dublin, about the year 1782, and kneeled down on her knees to him to ask his blessing. Many indeed has he supported that were left desolate on the world.

Having toiled now fifty years in the office of the ministry with as much diligence as ever man did before, he found himself at length, through age and infirmities, incapable for the discharge of his public duty. His frame was now unable, as mentioned already, to withstand the keen sharp country air, especially in winter, as every blast pierced through him. He could not bear, he thought, the fatigue of travelling ninety miles every summer, from Dublin to Fintona, and of returning thence on the approach of winter. He therefore took his final departure from it, about 1780, and removed to Dublin, to end his days. His carriage and horses he made a present of to Mr. Leslie, of Nutfield, in the county of Fermanagh. At that time he boarded and lodged with Samuel Watson, the bookseller, who lived in Dame-street. For himself and servant he paid him about 70*l.* a year, and provided his own wine.

My acquaintance commenced with this most excellent man in January 1781. A relation of mine, whose pleasure is to do good, took a filial care of his two old sisters living in Dromore; for which kindness he being very grateful expressed his desire to do as much for my friend, who only asked, that he would shew some countenance to me who was then a student in the university. Upon this he told him plainly, he could not promise to be of any use to me in the church, having but little interest in it, but he would

assist me with his good advice. In compliance with his desire I waited on him at his lodgings, and found him in his bedchamber, where he always sat unless when he had company he could not make free with. He was a remarkably tall large man; his eyebrows were quite gray; his shoulders somewhat bent by age; and his bones nearly twice the size of those of an ordinary man. He wore a brown wig, a blue coat with black cuffs, the breast of which was covered over with snuff, black velvet waistcoat and breeches, yarn stockings made of black wool, and small silver buckles in his shoes. His countenance shewed he had been handsome in his youth, and visibly displayed in it that genuine philanthropy which he possessed in such an eminent degree. He received me with kindness free from ostentation; but began soon to rally me for having bright steel buttons on my coat, which he thought too gay for one of a bachelor's standing in the university. "You're finely dressed," he observed, "with your fine bright buttons; I thought you were a man of sense and a scholar, but I have been deceived, I find: I believe you are but an indifferent sort of a body; I always judge of a man by his buttons." However, in a few minutes he became more civil, and, after conversing on different subjects, we parted on good terms. I renewed my visits, to which I was enticed by his agreeable and instructive conversation; but took care never to shew him the bright buttons again.

His manner of living then was simple and regular. He rose at nine o'clock in the morning, and took a breakfast of herb-tea, having not drunk foreign tea for thirty years before. Then he passed about an hour at prayer. After prayer he read two chapters in the Old Testament, two in the New, and four Psalms, which latter, as he told us, contained his piety. Then he generally amused himself with entertaining books until dinner, and after spending an hour at it, read until nine o'clock at night, when he took a supper of bread and whey, and then summoned the people he lived with to family-prayer; after which he employed himself at his books until eleven, and went to bed. His bedchamber was like a stove, he kept it so close and hot in the coldest of the heat of summer, night and day, such huge fires. This was his general way

of living. Now and then indeed he went out to pay visits to those he esteemed, and attended church regularly every Sunday, where he still sat in the reading-desk. At his lodgings he was visited sometimes by ecclesiastics of consequence, and others; but more usually by poor curates and readers, to whom he preached up content with their condition, and submission to superiors. Indeed he was always giving them good advice, reminding them of the sacred obligation laid on them, and telling them how they should be useful to the souls and bodies of the people under their care. He also now and then offered a little advice to his superiors, some of whom were not offended at his freedom.

Among these may be reckoned the archbishop of Dublin. His grace having paid him a visit at Mr. Watson's, he ventured to give him some advice, and at the same time begged pardon for the liberty he took. On which this prelate politely replied. "Sir, it is usual to look up to bishops, but I look up to you." He recommended once a candidate for holy orders to his grace, observing, that he was only acquainted with him for one year, but knew more of him during that time than others could ordinarily do in three years. "I'll ordain him," he rejoined, "on this recommendation." The archbishop, who was fond of his company, often pressed him to come and dine with him, but he declined his kind invitations, as he did not choose to be out at night, which he found hurtful to his constitution. His grace offered then to send his carriage for him, and home with him. Once he seemed to consent to go, but when the hour of the day approached, he sent an apology, apprehensive of getting cold. It is pleasing to see the second character in the Irish church pay such attention to so good a man. Mr. Skelton was sensible of his kindness, and used to say that his prelate was a good-natured man, and a friend to religion. "He is warm," he remarked, "but that is a concomitant of good-nature." He then mentioned an instance of his grace's conduct, in his public capacity, highly to his honour; but it is not, I think, prudent to publish it, lest it should seem to reflect on a certain eminent layman. On another occasion he observed, that no

one read the service of the church with so much solemnity and devotion as the archbishop of Dublin.

His first visit to the archbishop at his palace put him in mind of a sharp remark of the famous archbishop King, which he mentioned to his grace the present archbishop. When he was last in that room, he was just going, he said, to take his degree, having, with some more candidates for degrees, accompanied the proctor who brought them, as usual, to present them to his grace. They found the old archbishop sitting on a chair, and propt up with pillows on every side of him, having before him a table with two or three folios on it. After the ceremony of introduction, his grace being informed that one of the candidates was a young lord who had been very attentive to his books and was a good scholar, he said to him in a drawling voice, "My lord, I am happy to find you have been so diligent, and have made such proficiency in your learning; but I have a piece of advice to give you, which I hope you will take, be as unlike the rest of the lords of Ireland as you can, and then you'll do very well, you'll do very well."

Mr. Skelton, I believe, commenced his acquaintance with the bishop of Cloyne when he was dean of Clogher, for whom and for his family he had a high respect. His opinion of this prelate's great abilities, both as a preacher and a writer, was such as is generally held in this kingdom, and even acknowledged by most of his opponents. His lordship, he said, exceeded all preachers in tones, and Dr. Campbell in propriety of action; which latter he ascribed to his extraordinary skill in drawing. The bishop of Raphoe he esteemed for refusing, when he was a dean, on a scruple of conscience, another good living when it was offered to him. With respect to himself, he prayed God might strike him dead when he formed a thought of taking two livings. Once, he said, he could have obtained a second living, but he refused.

Yet we must not suppose that he spoke always in a strain of high panegyric of dignified ecclesiastics. But it would not be safe to touch on this delicate subject, and therefore at present every reader must strive to form a supposition for himself. I might produce here some of his

sharp remarks both on persons and practices, which, however agreeable to others, would probably be injurious to myself. He used to advise bishops to take care of their curates, and reward their faithful services. To one in particular, to whom he gave this advice, he said, "My lord, if you do so, the curates will be more attentive to their duty, for I must say, to the shame and scandal of the clergy, that there is scarce one of them who would not do more for a living of a hundred a year than for the whole kingdom of heaven." However, his advice was so disagreeable to the bishop, that he could never after gain an admittance into his lordship's presence.

His late rector Mr. Hawkshaw, whom in jest he called Measter, when he came to Dublin, paid him frequent visits. Indeed, from their first acquaintance they had lived on the most friendly footing, in the mutual exchange of every kind office.

In February 1781, the late Dr. Forsayth, of Trinity College, waiting on Mr. Skelton informed him, that the university, sensible of his great merit, had sent him to offer him the degree of doctor of divinity, if he would accept of it. Yet he declined this intended honour, with expressions of gratitude to the university, observing that he was too old to assume any new title. He told me, he was unable from age and infirmities to go through the collegiate exercises appointed on such occasions, and otherwise he would not take the degree. Besides, he said Jesus Christ forbade him to be a doctor, quoting a text of Scripture which he imagined to favour this odd opinion.

If a doctor of divinity ought to be deeply read in the science he professes, there were but few so well qualified as he to obtain that distinction. The perusal of the holy Scriptures employed a great part of his time, to which he was excited by a sense of duty, making use of all human means necessary to assist him in that spiritual study. His knowledge in divinity was equal to his diligence, of which he has given evident proofs by his learned works upon that subject. For the assistance I received from him in that most useful science I have a right to be grateful. He advised me to read "Leland's View of the State of Religion in the Heathen World," which, he said, was the best book

extant on the subject, candidly acknowledging that that author shewed the necessity of revelation even more clearly than he did in Deism Revealed. "When you have read that book," he said, "you may take the Bible into your hand, for he proves it to be the word of God." He told us it was he that first proposed the plan of this book to Dr. Leland, but he did not acknowledge it, though he returned thanks in his preface for the assistance he got from others. He recommended the study of the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew, which was not, he said, sufficiently understood by the critics who revived it. He also advised me to read the Greek Testament without a comment, that I might hence perceive the meaning which the original language naturally presented; and he explained to my satisfaction some passages which I could not fully understand. In the margin of his Bible he wrote many curious explanatory notes, the most of which he afterward published in his Senilia.

His knowledge, however, was not confined to divinity. He was a complete master of every subject, on which literary men usually converse. I have gained more information by two hours' conversation with him on an evening, than I did by studying hard at books a whole day. A young gentleman, a member of a debating society in the university, who was obliged to be prepared on a certain night in a part of the Life of Philip of Macedon, told me, that he happened to call on Mr. Skelton a day or two before the time, who acquainted him more accurately in an hour's conversation with every particular he wished to know, than if he had spent a whole day reading on the subject.

Beside the assistance already mentioned, he gave me some useful advice with respect to composition. In compliance with his desire, I shewed him some little pieces in prose of my own composition, with which he found great fault for want of perspicuity. I was therefore forced to pluck out of them many fine flowers which served only to conceal the sense. He advised me to copy some parts of Swift, of Robertson's History of Scotland, and of Blair's Sermons, to improve my style; of which I found the advantage. It is, however, necessary to observe, that every man of genius writes in a style peculiar to himself; he has a just confidence in his own powers, and dares to judge for

himself. Many writers of inferior abilities have made themselves completely ridiculous by attempting to imitate the peculiarities of great authors. Of all writers, Mr. Skelton said, Lactantius was the most clear, for in perusing him you seem to read only ideas, not words.

Having left Mr. Watson's, about the beginning of the year 1782, he went to board and lodge with a Mr. B—, in B— Street, a curious character, with whom he thought he should be very happy, as he was a man of a serious turn, and fond of talking about religion. He formerly kept a snuff-shop in C— Street, but having made a lucky hit in tobacco, as he thought, at the beginning of the war, he quitted the snuff-shop, and became all at once a grand tobacco merchant. In his religious opinions he was somewhat fickle, for he generally changed them once a year; having been in his time a Church-of-England-man, Moravian, Anabaptist, Presbyterian, Quaker, Seceder, New-light-man, Old-light-man, Mountain-man, and the like. Skelton and he were often together, for he used to break in on him to argue with him on religious matters. They argued furiously whole hours at once; but B—, he acknowledged, beat him at quoting Scripture, as he had it all by heart. He had odd notions about the influence of the Spirit, and forms of prayer, supporting them with great vehemence; which made me ask Mr. Skelton if he were a Methodist? "Oh yes," he said, "a powerful Methodist; he is inspired." Yet, with all his religion, he was a little licentious as I am assured, though he had a wife of his own. Indeed you would not suspect this from his appearance, for he was a gross little man, dressed in a blue coat, with a grave melancholy face; somewhat bald; having a few gray hairs scattered on the back of his head, and hanging stiffly down. You would rather, indeed, on looking at him, suspect he was a Methodist preacher, an office, I believe, which he sometimes exercised; at least, if he did not preach publicly, he exhorted the brethren in private.

Mr. Skelton's situation with them was not very pleasant. He was by nature of a social turn, and from age often stood in need of company; therefore he now and then asked his friends to dine with him, when he always paid for their dinner. But this, it seems, was not agreeable to

Mrs. B—, who set up for a grand lady, and did not choose to entertain the persons he asked to her house, though they were such as might amuse and instruct her. He told me once he was sorry he could not ask me to dine with him, as Mr. B— had sent him a letter into his room a day or two before, informing him, it was inconvenient for his wife to entertain his company; so that, if he could not be without these, he must change his lodgings. He said, he would provide other lodgings for himself before winter; but he would soon go out to the Phœnix-park to spend one or two of the summer months at the Hibernian school.*

He had boarded and lodged the summer before in the same place, at the house of the Rev. Mr. O'Neill, chaplain to the school, who, having a relish for his conversation, used every means to make his house agreeable to him. About June of this year he went out to live at this gentleman's during the summer, having left Mr. B—'s in consequence of the letter he received. Soon after his arrival here he got a terrible fall, which might have killed an ordinary person of his age, but it did him no harm. However, he took it into his head about the end of July, that he was just going to die, and was visited then, among others of consequence, by Dr. Hastings, and the bishop of Cloyne. His disorder at that time was, I believe, mostly the effect of imagination. At least his physician, Dr. Fleury, seemed to think so. Yet it was observed, that in the latter part of his life he was not so much affected with imaginary complaints as before. Experience had probably in some degree convinced him of the inanity of his gloomy conjectures, and therefore he did not yield so much to the influence of imagination.

A few weeks after he was attacked by this disorder, I wrote him a letter from the north of Ireland, requesting his assistance in a particular affair; on which occasion he applied in my behalf with the sincerity of a friend. In his answer he mentioned, as the business seemed to require, what a high respect the late dean Bailie had for a certain illustrious lady, who was so eminent for her charities, and then made use of these words; "The dean knows me too, but affects to revolve in an orbit so far above me, as scarce to

* A school for educating the orphans and children of soldiers, in Ireland.

ee me twinkling below him; the distance equally dimi-
ishes his magnitude to my eyes."

While he stayed at the Hibernian school, he catechised
he children every Sunday in the chapel at the communion-
able, and lectured most instructively on the catechism.
)ne of his lectures I had the happiness to hear, and was
leased and improved by it. He was indeed remarkably
ond both of soldiers and seamen, and once gave this ad-
ice to Miss Bruce, "Marry a soldier, my girl, for you will
ind more honest soldiers than honest parsons."

He offered ten guineas to make a reservoir to keep water
n for the benefit of the school, on condition it should be
uilt with stones alone without mortar, which he thought
vould make it more durable. But the mason refusing to
omply of course did not get the money.

On his return to Dublin about the beginning of October,
e took up his abode in Trinity-street, at the house of Ki-
ahan and Gregg, grocers, with whom he had agreed for
is diet and lodging. The Dublin Evening Post being pub-
ished next door to him, I once asked him if he ever read
t? "No," he replied, "I have not read a newspaper these
ve years past; I have nothing to do with this world; for
am just on the point of leaving it. Besides, they are all
ull of malice, which must offend a Christian to see." When
remarked to him that he seemed to know all that was in
he papers, he observed, that he heard it from those who
ame to see him, as they were often talking of politics.

His antagonist Mr. B—, at whose house he lodged be-
ore, used to visit him in Trinity-street, and argue with his
sual violence, being very stiff in the opinions which he
dopted for the time. He had then, it seems, assumed some
ew notions, as he was not so much of a Methodist as for-
nerly. One evening I was sitting with Mr. Skelton when
is servant brought him in a letter, which, on opening, he
erceived to come from B—, stuffed with texts of Scripture,
n some of the points they were disputing about a day or
wo before. For B—, as it suited him, attacked his adver-
ary either in close fight, or threw his darts at a distance;
o eager was he for victory. He was strenuous in assert-
ng the necessity of extempore prayer, despising all forms,
s is usual with fanatics.

A few more particulars of this original character may, not improperly, be introduced here. In January, 1787, having come to Dublin after two years' absence, I saw him walking through the streets with a long gray beard, like that of an old Turk or Rabbi. On inquiry, I found he had appeared in that trim some time before in a coffee-house, when the people gathering about him, asked him why he wore the long beard? He replied gravely, he would not shave his beard till he had paid his debts, having failed in the year 1785. Soon after his failure, on a meeting of his creditors at his house, they asked him how he could account for the great deficiency in his affairs? On which he called for the Bible, that he might reply Scripturally, and read to them the first verse of the thirtieth chapter of Job in a grave solemn voice; "But now they that are younger than I, have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock." This is the only answer he would give them. When one of them a Mr. L— said to him, "These are two handsome pistols over the fire side."—"Yes they are," he replied. Then taking them down, he put one into his hand, and kept the other to himself, and said to him, "Will you take a shot?" Which made Mr. L— run out of the house in dread of his life. Thus did he settle accounts with his creditors.

Some time after my return to the country I received a letter from a friend in Dublin, a man of real original humour, informing me, that Mr. B—, who had so often changed his religions before, had now at last turned Papist. He enclosed me B—'s apology to the public for so doing, with his name annexed. It was printed and spread through Dublin to justify his character, which was maliciously attacked by some evil-minded persons. In this he candidly owns that he had adopted at different times the religious opinions of almost every species of Protestants. On his becoming a Papist he shaved his beard, and resumed his usual appearance; on which my friend's little nephew, who heard him declaring in the coffee-house he would not shave his beard till he had paid his debts, came running up to him one day with joy in his face, and said, "Uncle! uncle! B— has paid his debts, for I see him walking through the streets without the beard."

Having been drawn naturally into this short digression, I return now to the course of my narrative.

In 1782, Mr. Skelton was deprived by death of his old friend and patron the bishop of Clogher, who lived until he was above ninety; so long did it please God to bless the world with this good bishop, who, to the honour of his country, was born in England. He had the satisfaction of having promoted some worthy men of great merit, but little interest; among whom, beside Mr. Skelton, is Dr. Thomas Campbell, who has paid a just tribute of praise to him in the Philosophical Survey of Ireland. The bishop was a pious, humble, good-natured man, a generous encourager of literature, kind to his domestics, and justly esteemed by all those who had an opportunity of knowing his virtues.

This same year produced also another event, which affected Mr. Skelton even more sensibly than the death of his good friend the bishop of Clogher. It being uncommonly wet and cold both in seed-time and summer, the poor scanty crop, that escaped from the inclemency of the weather, was not fit to be cut down until the winter approached, and then it was mostly destroyed by the rain. Mr. Skelton foresaw, with many others, that a dearth would be the consequence of all this, and endeavoured, like the patriarch of Egypt, to provide against this calamity. In the winter he first sent a large sum of his own to Drogheda to buy oatmeal for his poor, and then applied, as usual, to those who had landed property in the parish; all of whom contributed except a Mr. D—, who holds a bishop's lease. With these contributions, and an additional sum of his own, he bought more meal at Drogheda, where the whole was stored during the winter, in order to be conveyed in certain portions to his parish, when the dearth should require it. He was not deceived in his apprehensions. The famine that prevailed in the summer of 1783, was the most severe that even history records to have taken place in Ireland. The poor in many parts must have died of hunger, had they not been relieved by the liberal donations of those whom Providence blessed with riches. While the famine was advancing towards its height, Mr. John Latouche carried a message to Mr. Skelton from his father to this effect, that if he wanted money to buy meal for his poor, he might

draw on his bank for any sum he stood in need of, which he would willingly bestow for so good a purpose. Mr. Skelton, who had never seen the good old gentleman, being surprised at this uncommon liberality, replied, that he was very grateful for his kind offer, but that he had sufficient to keep his poor alive without taking money from him, who employed his wealth in doing good. The generosity of this truly charitable man, who is now gone to reap the fruits of his labours, and of his worthy family, whose purses have been always open to relieve the distressed, is sufficiently known in this kingdom without any commendation of mine.

Mr. Skelton, during this dearth, intrusted the distribution of the meal to his curate Mr. Auchinleck, who assured me, that this good clergyman laid out on it, beside the contribution of others, 200*l* of his own. At dinner he used to say to us, I cannot suffer my poor parishioners to starve in hard times, for they have fed me on good fare these many years past. His first toast now after dinner was the family of the Latouches, who had souls, he said, of a superior nature to the generality of men. His next was Richmond the dancing-master, which he usually prefaced with these words; "I give you the health of a hero, Richmond the dancing-master." He then told us of the noble exploits performed by this brave old man, a short account of which I transcribe from his Senilia.

"One night, after his seventy-fifth year, having read prayers with his family, he heard, as he was going to bed, a loud cry of murder in a female voice, repeated from a house, not far from his own, in Prince's-street, Dublin. This hurried him down to his parlour with a case of pistols in his hands, followed by his daughter. The cry still continuing, he opened a window, but it was too dark without to see any thing. Having a providential apprehension for his daughter, though none for himself, he had just time to push her from the window behind the adjoining pier, when one of the robbers, of whom there were six, fired on him, and the ball passed through the place where his daughter stood. Richmond, by the light of the villain's discharge, shot him dead. He and a brave servant-boy of his then sallied into the street, where perceiving by the woman's cries that the rest of the gang had got into the house of a neighbour con-

ned to his bed by sickness, and were by repeated wounds
nurdering the servant-maid, he, his boy, and some of the
vatch then coming to his assistance, soon cleared the house,
ought the gang in the street, knocked one of them down
vith a clubbed pistol, pursued the rest, and took two of
hem, whom he lodged in Newgate, before he returned to
is terrified family. The prisoners he afterward prosecuted
o the gallows. It was but too plain, this was the first time
he brave man had been concerned in blood. It was but
vith difficulty that the minister of his parish could prevent
is sinking under the grief of having sent a fellow-creature
nto eternity with a load of guilt on his head. Some time
fter, this undaunted man going homeward at night, found
servant-boy crying in the street, who had been just then
obbed by three footpads of a tankard, which he had been
ent out with for some drink. These Richmond instantly
ursued into a close back-yard, being joined by a stranger
f a spirit like his own. They were fired upon by the vil-
ains, but they took too of them and afterward had them
onvicted and executed. It has been said, that my hero
cquitted himself with similar honour in a third adventure
vith robbers, the particulars of which I am not acquainted
vith."

If Richmond had lived in heroic ages, he would have
een crowned with laurel, he said, as a public benefactor
f mankind; and then accused this country of ingratitude
or not rewarding his useful services. The duke of Rutland,
uring his lieutenancy, once met Mr. Richmond in the park,
nd asked him, if he were the person mentioned by Mr.
Skelton in his last volume? He answered he was. His
race then promised to provide for him, but died before he
was able to effect it.

A few months before the dearth already mentioned, a
young man from Fintona, who was then a journeyman
apothecary in Dublin, being attacked by a violent disorder,
Mr. Skelton paid a nurse half a guinea a week to take care
of him, and employed a physician to visit him twice a day.
When he grew a little better, he sent him to Fintona for the
advantage of his native air, and on his return to Dublin
had a place provided for him. His father, who was then
dead, had been a great favourite with Mr. Skelton, as he

dealt extensively in linen-yarn, and was thus very useful to the industrious poor at Fintona.

While he was employed in supplying the wants of his indigent parishioners, he had an interview, in May of the same year (1783), with the late missionary Mr. Wesley, who was then also engaged in his work of charity. This being their first meeting, they had no religious altercation. A few days after, Mr. Wesley paid him a second visit, and on the evening of the same day I happened to visit him. He informed me then, that that gentleman had been with him in the morning, and told him something which he thought a little extraordinary. A woman had come over to him from England, he said, who was plagued with a strange disorder in her belly; on which, being pressed to speak plainly and tell her complaint, he owned, after some hesitation, that it was the devil, she said, she had got in her belly, and had applied for cure to many Protestant bishops, Popish priests, and Presbyterian teachers, but all to no purpose. "What will you do then?" he asked him. "I expect," he replied, "to cure her by prayer and fasting, and the like."—"Take care, Mr. Wesley," he remarked, "of what you are about; you want, I perceive, to support your new religion by the force of miracles; but if you once set up for working miracles, the people will flock to you from all quarters, they will meet you in the streets and highways, as they did our Saviour, and perhaps they may take you short; so that you may lose more than you'll gain by pretending to work miracles." He could not swallow Mr. Wesley's story about the woman with the devil in her belly, and this gentleman thought it better to send her home to her own country, without attempting to take the devil out of her.

However, if we can believe what he tells us in his journals, he has been very successful in effecting some cures of this sort. He went once, as he informs us,* to see a woman in a melancholy state, and when he came to her, boldly asked the devil how he dare enter into a Christian? On which the devil spoke thus to him out of her belly, "She is not a Christian, she is mine." But Mr. W., it seems, soon forced the intruder to shift his quarters.

* 3d Journ. p. 95.

Mr. Skelton, in his conversation with him, talked lightly of the common stories we hear about devils and ghosts, and mentioned to him, in a ludicrous way, that some people in one of his parishes, imagined they were haunted by them. But Mr. W. he said, was very grave, and did not seem willing to join in the joke. He would indeed have been inconsistent with himself, if he had; for there was scarce a magazine he put out, that had not some marvellous story in it of this kind. Yet he probably considered these and the like as so many pious frauds necessary to serve the cause of Methodism, which usually has most effect on weak minds. And indeed it is but reasonable to think, that he had too much good sense to believe every absurdity he countenanced by his authority.

In June, Mr. Skelton changed his lodgings again. Leaving the grocer's in Trinity-street, he went to board and lodge in Peter's-row with the Rev. Richard Drury, a young clergyman whom he recommended for a cure to the archbishop of Dublin. His reasons for going to live with this clergyman were such as had always an effect on his benevolent mind.

His strenuous applications for me at this time to certain persons of consequence, the disappointments he met with, and the excuses that were offered, I am obliged to omit, lest I should seem to obtrude myself or my affairs on the public attention, which of late has been the practice of some biographers, who had not prudence enough to conceal their vanity. Yet I shall not, I hope, be accused of this weakness by quoting a part of a letter he wrote me then, especially as it contains a general advice to every young clergyman on undertaking the care of a parish.

"You see I have lost no time nor ground which I could use for you. And you see too how I am made accountable for you to lord * * *. But pray consider, how awfully, and even fearfully I am made accountable for you to an infinitely greater Lord. You cannot blast me without blasting yourself in the sight of God and man. You are rather to derive fear than vanity from the high character given of you, and for the struggle made for you among the most considerable men of the time, excited by the providence of God. Let therefore a warm zeal animate you to the service and

glory of God, and to the salvation of souls. Let the wisdom of the serpent and the innocence of the dove direct all your exertions. Let your words be few, slow, and articulate, that the hearer, whether in church or company, may have no trouble in taking your meaning, nor have occasion to find fault with it when he understands it. Maturely consider, that lord ***, dean **, and many others, before whom you are to appear either publicly or privately, have a thousand times more sense than you. Think therefore before you speak, and speak but little, enough for the occasion, whatever it may be, and not a syllable more. God direct and bless you. You cannot conceive how great an object of apprehension you are, to your poor old friend,

"PHIL. SKELTON."

It was indeed with propriety he prescribed to others, who was himself so eminent for his abilities in the pulpit, and his conduct in private life.

About the end of the same year, his ears were stunned with the fame of the pulpit-orator, Dr. Peckwell, who preached through Dublin in meeting-houses, methodist-houses, and churches. Crowds followed after him, enticed by novelty, as he preached without notes, which is a sure way of captivating the multitude, who are always taken with strange appearances. I went to Bride's church to hear him, and sat in the reading-desk with Mr. Skelton, who, though he complimented him when he had finished on the orthodoxy of his sermon, yet afterward remarked to me, that his action seemed more violent than proper. "When I looked up at him," he said, "I saw his arms from my seat under the pulpit moving over my head, like the arms of a windmill." He also observed, that he was too handsome for a preacher, as the women, instead of profiting by his sermons, would be only admiring him. Our Saviour's person and face were, he said, on that account, rather ordinary, as some of the fathers inform us. About three months after, he sent him from England a sermon he had just then published, the merits of which I thought not extraordinary. But a cold phlegmatic reader is not so easily pleased as a hearer who is warned and captivated by the voice, gesticulations and countenance of the extempore preacher. *Adde vultum habitumque hominis.*

To remedy, in some degree, the inconvenience that attends the use of notes, Mr. Skelton advised me to follow his method of copying my sermons in a large fair hand. It was indeed his ardent wish, that the clergy of our church, in their public and private conduct, should afford no pretence for the cavils of sectaries, some of whom tell us we read our sermons like a ballad. Yet he was possessed, I think, with an unreasonable dread of the Presbyterians; for he imagined they would have taken his living from him before he died; one of them, he said, who was a volunteer, told him so. But his apprehensions, we may suppose, were partly the effects of old age. *Senectus falsa formidine ludit.*

If the people of our church were allowed to adopt the Presbyterian mode of choosing their own clergy, it would produce, he said, more harm than good. For in that case, the landlords would oblige them to vote for those they pleased, as they do now at elections, because it would then be worth their while to interfere to get a friend or a relation a good living. "If so," he continued, "I should never have got a living, for my father was only a plain countryman." But if there were opposite interests in a parish, this would produce boxing, quarrelling, and ill-will. It appears then, that injustice, would be done according to that mode; injustice, it is owned, is also done now, and since injustice must be done, let it be done quietly.

He was not only qualified for sober reasoning of this kind, but could adapt his conversation and behaviour to his company. I never found him out of temper, but always gay and good-humoured. He was never sour nor sullen with the young, but made a proper allowance for the levities peculiar to their age, having nothing of the old man about him, except that he was a little deaf. Of children he was remarkably fond, and could spend hours with them, partaking of their little sports.

Some time after this, he consented to dine with a certain bishop, on condition he would have dinner on the table at two o'clock; but Mr. Skelton came exactly at twelve, when his lordship and his lady were going out on business. The bishop told him he was very sorry he came so soon, as Mrs. * * and he were obliged to go out, and could not be home until two. But he observed, that his lordship need not

be concerned, as he would amuse himself with "these sweet little things," pointing to the children. Accordingly, he diverted himself with them, at ball or marbles, or such like childish sports, until his lordship returned, when he told him he was charmed with their company, and that they only wanted wings to be angels.

A part of a letter he wrote me, when I complained of being too much disturbed by the noise of children, may serve still more to illustrate his character in this particular. "Play with the children," he said, "now and then, the best method of conciliating their father and mother; and then little laughing children are, of all others, the sweetest and most pleasing companions. Give one of them an apple, and another a fig, and settle with them not to be too noisy when you are at your book or pen. At other times, invite them to be noisy with yourself, and to ride on your back."

Though his company was so agreeable, yet he frequently spent his evenings alone, and often told me, when I called to see him, that it was a charity to come and sit with him awhile, he was so much deserted. Of his conversation, however instructive and amusing, I was deprived in the beginning of the ensuing year (1784) but still enjoyed the benefit of his letters.

In the same year he published by subscription his sixth volume, entitled, "An Appeal to Common Sense on the Subject of Christianity," &c. This volume, the profits of which were, as the former ones, to be applied to the Magdalen charity, is also dedicated to lady Arabella Denny.

The Appeal is, in my opinion, superior in style and arrangement to any thing he wrote before. It is in general plain, sensible, void of false ornament, from which his sermons and other pieces are not entirely free. It contains an historical proof of the truth of Christianity, and shews his faculties were in their full force at the age of seventy-six. To this are added, "Some Thoughts on Common Sense," in which there are some attempts at wit not always successful; for his wit, though excellent in company, seemed to evaporate when communicated to paper. The rest of this volume consists of thirteen hymns, with a poetic introduction to them, and a Latin poem, which appear rather

calculated to enliven his own piety in private, than to excite devotion in others.

A few days after the publication of this volume, he received the following letter.

"Reverend Sir,

"I have read your Appeal to Common Sense on the Subject of Christianity. I wish all the world could say the same; but at present few can have that advantage. If you will permit a less expensive edition to be published, that may be the means of rendering the circulation more extensive, and of promoting the great end for which you laboured.

"I am your humble servant,

"SARAH STRINGER."

Summer-Hill, Sept. 21, 1784.

In compliance with this proposal, which, it may be supposed, was very agreeeble to him, a cheaper edition was published soon after at her expense, with the foregoing letter prefixed. When it was in the press, he sent her 12*l.* to pay part of the expense of printing, but she refused to take it. Of this edition, he bestowed about two hundred on each of the parishes he had the care of, either as curate or rector.

Mrs. Stringer having earnestly requested him to permit her to have his picture taken, he at last consented, on her promise of allowing no one to take a copy of it, and of destroying it before she died. This lady then employed a Mr. Holmes to draw it on canvas, who made as exact a likeness as ever I saw.* Formerly, a Mr. John Eccles, of Fintona, took his picture in profile, but he would not sit to have it taken in full.

He was accused this year of being the author of a political pamphlet called the "Alarm," which he publicly disavowed in a newspaper.

The favourable reception of the Appeal induced him, even at so advanced an age, to continue writing for the

* She died in the latter end of March, having destroyed the picture three months before.

public, which he offered partly as an apology for not writing to me as often as he could wish, as appears by the following extract of a letter I received from him in October, 1785.

"My not answering your letters so soon as both you and I wish, is not by any means owing to my forgetfulness of, or indifference to you. My esteem of you, and my friendship for you, are still the same. But my health is precarious, and my spirits for the greater part low. Besides I am even yet hammering out a seventh volume, and have near enough to fill it up of matter extremely miscellaneous and unconnected. Every thing I happen to think of goes into the farrago; but it consists mostly of short answers to infidel arguments, intermixed with strokes of humour, and even natural curiosities. The new mode of franking letters is yet a greater obstacle to my correspondence with you; for as the franks must be dated, when I have got one of them, indisposition or business, or visits run me beyond the date, and the cover is lost. I can have no frank for this, and therefore send the postage with it, that my poor curate need not pay for that which is not worth a farthing."

In the following year his seventh volume was published, entitled, "Senilia, or an Old Man's Miscellany." The purport of it is in some degree explained in the foregoing extract. Its materials are indeed very various, and wrought into a style tolerably natural and agreeable; but the most valuable part of it all is, in my opinion, "Brief Observations on some Passages in the New Testament," which are useful, intelligible, consistent with Scripture, and common sense.

This volume, being also octavo, was published by Sleater, to whom Mr. Skelton, when he gave him the copy, agreed to pay 20*l.* to purchase the paper, being diffident of its success, as it was written in extreme old age. But this bookseller informed him, when it was in the press, that he was of opinion it would obtain the sale desired, and that he would not take the money. This is an instance of generosity somewhat extraordinary, as but few men of business, in such a case, would have any scruple to take whatever sum should be offered them.

A part of this 20*l.* and also of the 12*l.* which Mrs. Stringer refused to accept of, he bestowed on the poor in Dublin, and the rest on those in Fintona, who had a more natural claim on him than the others. Yet a great city affords such innumerable objects of charity, that a man of a benevolent mind, who lives there, is excited both by his feelings and his duty to relieve some of them. A young clergyman, who was intimate with Mr. Skelton, went once, by his desire, to a bank in Dublin, to know if they would exchange for him eleven light half-guineas, which they had sent him; but on his return from the bank, he found that he had given them all away to the poor.

Yet, in the distribution of his charities, he seldom gave any thing to those we call genteel beggars, who tell us, they lived formerly in a genteel way, but by disappointments and losses were brought to their present distress. A woman of this sort came to his lodgings in Dublin one day, asking for charity; but when he began to speak to her in his usual tone of voice, she requested he would speak low, for, being a gentlewoman, she did not wish it should be known that she asked charity. "O then," said he, "you may go about your business; for I never give charity to a gentlewoman."

He published this year (1786) a short answer to a Catechism, used at Sunday schools, written by one Watson, a Yorkshire vicar, which he supposed to contain an erroneous doctrine with respect to the state of men immediately after death. This answer he sent to all the bishops in England and Ireland, that they might exert their authority against a book of such pernicious tendency. Accordingly, the archbishop of Dublin stopped the use of it in his diocess.

The summer and autumn of this year were remarkable, it is well known, for the ravages of the Right-boys, who, without any pretence of justice, robbed the established clergy in the south of most of their property. These insurgents, though barbarians themselves, contributed to serve the cause of literature, as they gave rise to many most excellent pamphlets, which otherwise would never have been produced. The rights of the clergy thus invaded became a general subject of conversation, not only with themselves, but also with the laity. Every newspaper gave

some new account of the horrid deeds of these rioters, who feared neither God nor man. The newspapers also abounded with many wild proposals for a commutation of tithe, communicated to the public fresh from the heads of essayists or paragraph-writers, residing in aerial habitations. Amidst this general fermentation, I wrote to Mr. Skelton to have his opinion on these matters, and received the following letter, which, for evident reasons, I give entire.

"DUBLIN, Bride-street, No. 45, Nov. 4, 1786.

"Dear Burdy,

"No more than one letter of yours to me, beside this of the present month, occurs to my declining memory, and in that you kindly excuse my answering every letter. The infirmities of a man approaching near to his eightieth year, make such an indulgence indeed very requisite; especially, as since we saw each other, a sixth and then a seventh volume of my works have been published; and I am now republishing the sermons of Robert Walker, a Scottish Presbyterian minister, which have deservedly had five previous editions in Great Britain. To this sixth edition, I prefix a long letter of my own, to encourage both the Dublin bookseller, and the Irish reader. The sermons of this worthy author, deceased two or three years ago, are most excellent in themselves, and greatly wanted in these times.

"Any advice you may have received from me, it was but a small part of my duty to impart to one so much younger than myself, and but a poor proof of my friendship for you. You do better in remembering it, than I should do in thinking of it.

"The inquiries you make in this letter shew to me, that you purpose addressing the public by somewhat, and on a subject not a little ticklish. Take care, while you think you are treading only on ashes, that there is not a great deal of fire under your feet.

"I cannot, more exactly than you do, repeat the resolution of the House of Commons concerning the rights and demands of the clergy; nor the year of its date, but I know it was made when Boyle was speaker, I believe about forty years ago. The demands of the clergy for tithe-agistment was so founded on common law, that they carried all the

causes in the court of Exchequer which they commenced before that vote, but never durst since commence another. Who spoke for, or who against that vote, in the house, I do not remember, and hardly guess at the time.

"The southern insurgents are sinking the rights of our clergy, wherever they prevail, to a third of what had been formerly received, which could not have been much more than half of what was due. The immediate cause of this is obvious to every body. The primary cause is equally intelligible to me. We clergy (I include myself) are objects of displeasure in the eyes of God. Our luxury, pride, and neglect of duty must be punished. We must be put in mind, that there is a God. Poverty and oppression must bring us to ourselves, or extermination must follow. When church livings shall no longer be worth struggling for, the shameful market made of them will cease; and here I cease, with an assurance that I am still your real friend,

"PHIL. SKELTON."

This was the last letter he ever sent me. In January I saw him again in Dublin, where I found him in Bride-street, living with the same family, who had removed thither. He appeared visibly on the decline, but a severe cold, from which he was recovering, probably made him look worse: this he imagined would be the cause of his death, for he told me he should die in eight days. But in a day or two after, having banished these gloomy notions, he regained his usual gaiety. Yet he was still saying he could not live long, as he should be eighty years of age, if he lived to the end of the next month. He complained then, as before, of the lonely manner in which he spent his time, observing that every one seemed to be tired of him. No one indeed could be tired of his company, who had a taste for rational, agreeable, and improving conversation, for even then his social qualities were scarcely at all impaired. But it is the fate of man to experience neglect in the decline of life, when it is suspected he can be no longer useful.

At that time I attended his family prayer one or two evenings, when I found he had made an additional prayer about the Right-boys, in which he prayed that God would turn these infatuated insurgents, who had risen up against

his church, from their wicked ways. Indeed they stood in need of all good Christians' prayers. He really believed that the Presbyterians of the north, and the Catholics of the south, had formed a combination against the established church to destroy it, which he supposed would soon be effected. These apprehensions, however, for the safety of the church, to which he was often liable, were not then the mere effects of imagination, as the gloomy appearance of ecclesiastical affairs seemed to threaten some destructive revolution. The pamphlets published afterward by the abettors of the opposite parties, clearly displayed their cordial dislike to our church establishment.

His opinions upon every subject he communicated then with as much facility as when I saw him before; but the duties of my profession hurried me away from his pleasing and instructive company. In February, 1787, I parted for the last time from that dear and worthy man, of whose friendship I shall always retain a grateful remembrance. When I was just going away, he said to me, with tears in his eyes, "I know I shall never see you again, but God be with you, trust in Christ, and he will preserve you; when you meet with afflictions and disappointments in this world, as you surely will, ask for his gracious aid, and he will give it to you, he will comfort you in your sorrow. Preach the gospel to your people without any false refinements, and act as it becomes a minister of the gospel, and God will reward you." At these words I left him with a sorrowful heart, still reflecting as I passed along on this solemn expression, "I know I shall never see you again."

He prophesied at length too truly of himself. On Good Friday, the 6th of April, he was attacked with a suppression of urine, a complaint of which he had often felt symptoms before, on account of his taking so little exercise. The professional skill of his physician Dr. Fleury, and of Surgeon Bowes, was unable to remove the disorder, which wasted him gradually. Yet he rose every day, and felt little or no pain, but just dozed away. While he attempted to read at his table, he usually fell asleep over his book, and continued thus for some time. The disorder, which was owing, as the physician told me, to a total relaxation of the parts, was for a while in some degree abated by the use of a catheter,

but even this at length proved inefficacious; he was then convinced it would be the cause of his death, though at first he did not imagine it would be fatal. About this time a young man from Fintona called to see him, and found him dozing with his head on his table. Having inquired of him most affectionately concerning his parishioners, he lamented with tears in his eyes the irregularity of their conduct, but especially their unhappy propensity to drunkenness, of which all his instructions could not cure them. The disorder, though it daily consumed his constitution, had no effect on his understanding, and he saw death approaching with a calm and steady mind. The Rev. Doctor Hastings, archdeacon of Dublin, attended him carefully during his illness; which, having confined him to his bed only two days, put an end to his life on Friday the 4th of May, 1787. When he breathed his last you would have imagined he was just falling asleep, he died so quiet and resigned. The evening before he repeated intelligibly the Lord's Prayer, and never spoke after.

He had always a horror of coming to life in his coffin, and therefore, when he was even in good health, often requested his physician to cut his throat before he should be buried. It being accordingly thought necessary not to bury him, until some marks of corruption should appear on his body, he was kept until the Tuesday following, when he was buried privately, at six o'clock in the morning, near the west door of St. Peter's church-yard, the place he had appointed for himself. His funeral was attended by six or seven Dublin curates, and by Dr. Hales, of Trinity College. The short funeral service was read over his grave by Mr. Queal, one of the curates of the parish.

He left behind him, after all his just debts were paid, near 700*l.*, of which at least 540*l.* were due from his parish, including 120*l.* chargeable on his successor, for building part of a glebe house, which lay in an unfinished state for some time previous to his death; so that he had hardly 152*l.* clear in his own hands. The whole he disposed of by will* in the following manner. To his nephew Dr. Skelton, he left 150*l.*; to his servant John Swap, 40*l.*, and the rest to Miss Leslie, daughter of Henry Leslie, esq. and

* He begins his will thus, "In the name of the glorious and eternal Trinity," &c.

grand-daughter of the late Rev. William Leslie, his old friend. He appointed the Rev. Dr. Hastings, his sole executor. As an apology for his making his will in this manner, he mentions in it, that he was indebted to the Rev. William Leslie, under God, for his preferments in the church, and to his family for many kindnesses during a series of years. To his own relations, he declares, he owed nothing, as he had given them at different times above 1400*l.*

His manuscripts and his works he left to Dr. Hastings, whom he styles his excellent friend, and to his servant his clothes, his watch worth about 1*l.* 10*s.*, and all his other utensils, except four articles to Mr. Drury, with whom he lodged. His servant, who came to live with him in 1783, received from him in presents during the last year of his life, beside the sum left him in his will, 23*l.*, for he had the art of insinuating himself into his good graces. He was a Scotchman, and an old soldier, but sober, wise, and remarkable for his discretion, a very useful talent. He also wrote a fair hand, and copied for him the greatest part of his two last volumes.—"Sweet Aberdeen," his master used to say, "that produced John and Dr. Reid."

Philip Skelton, it has been shewn, was of a tall stature and majestic appearance; his countenance was agreeable and placid, displaying evident marks of a mind replete with humanity. His strong athletic frame enabled him in his youth to excel in the manly exercises, of his skill in which, and of his bravery, sufficient instances have been produced. But it was the chief business of his life, he considered, to perform the sacred duties of the ministry with conscientious care, wherein he was hardly exceeded by any clergyman of any age. Sincere, strenuous, vehement in his admonitions, he was truly sensible of the importance of the glorious end he had in view, the eternal happiness of his fellow-creatures. He told them of a heaven and a hell where the virtuous shall be rewarded and the wicked punished, exciting them by the most powerful arguments to seek the felicity of the one, and avoid the misery of the other. He declared open war against vice and impiety in every station, careless of the event, and only influenced by conscience. To instruct the ignorant, rouse the indolent, rebuke the obstinate, rectify the misguided, and turn the

disobedient to the wisdom of the just, was the great object of his labours.

His abilities were equal to his zeal. The natural powers bestowed on him by Providence he improved by an attentive application to almost every species of literature, but chiefly by a careful perusal of the holy Scriptures. His sermons, fraught with good sense, and animated with the sacred truths of the gospel, were composed in a strong, nervous, oratorial style, that suited the forcible manner of his delivery. His action in the pulpit, which flowed from the sincerity of his heart, was either violent or temperate according to the nature of his subject. An argument he used in favour of this mode of preaching may not improperly be introduced. "Men," he said, "who are born deaf and dumb have the thoughts of others communicated to them by external signs; those who are born blind have them communicated by words; and therefore those who have them communicated both by words and signs, must receive them more forcibly."

His descriptive faculties, and his command over the passions, were very powerful. A gentleman told me, he heard him describing in Werburgh's church the torments of hell in a manner so terrifying as made him shiver in his place. He preached once two Sundays successively in Lisburn church. The first Sunday (I was assured by a person present) he made his audience all laugh, the second he made them all cry. While he was delivering his awful lectures in his church, he has been often so much affected by the subject, that the tears trickled down his cheeks, which produced a similar effect on his hearers.

The purity of his life gave an additional authority to his preaching. He prescribed no duty, enjoined no mortification, of which he did not first set the example by his own private conduct. His charities, which, if not well authenticated, would be incredible, seem to lead us back to the pure and primitive age of the gospel when Christians had all their worldly goods in common. Even in plentiful times he gave, it appears, the half of his income to feed the poor; but in a year of scarcity he did not allow himself the usual necessaries of life. His forgiving his indigent tenants their rent at such a season of calamity, his denying himself the

use of snuff, his living on scanty fare for the sake of his poor, and above all, his selling his books to procure them subsistence, eminently display his unbounded and uncommon charity. In their sickness he supplied them with medicines and medical aid, and in their necessities with food. He had a horror to think of any one dying of hunger, and once gave this advice to his poor during a dearth, we may suppose before he got a living. "If you have not food, beg it; if you can't get for begging, steal; if you can't get by stealing, rob, and don't starve."* The fatherless, the widow, and those who were in real want, found him a benevolent assistaut; yet he examined so carefully into the condition of those he relieved, that he was seldom imposed upon by improper objects of charity. It may be said, that having no wife and children to support, he had nothing else to do with his money but give it away to the poor; but on examining the conduct of mankind we shall find that those who have no children are at least as avaricious and uncharitable as those that have. The feelings of the latter are indeed more delicate than those of the former, as their tenderness for their own offspring contributes to excite in them a sympathy for the distresses of others. To his relations he was sufficiently munificent, though his charity obliged him to give them only a part; had he not indeed used extraordinary frugality, he could not have been so liberal to them and to the poor.

He was also eminent for the virtues of humility, sincerity and gratitude. A clergyman, who professes himself the follower of a divine Master so distinguished for humility, should be decorated, he thought, above all others, with that amiable virtue. He therefore severely censured the pride and insolence so conspicuous in the conduct of some churchmen, who shew themselves so very unlike the meek author of Christianity. The term gentleman, which is usually affixed to that of clergyman, he considered as highly improper, it being a title of worldly origin unsuitable to the spiritual nature of his office. Our Saviour, he remarked, was no gentleman, the apostles were no gentlemen; but, he said, our fine genteel clergy in the present days do not

* This advice is countenanced by the authority of Solomon, Prov. vi. 30. "Men do not despise a thief if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry."

wish to resemble our Saviour or his apostles in any particular. Very different was the conduct of this humble pastor, who looked on his poorer brethren as his friends and fellow-creatures, as children of the same universal parent, and candidates for the same blessed immortality.

His sincerity was at least equal to his humility. In his private dealings he would take no advantage of his neighbour, nor even rigorously require his due, having a soul superior to every thing mean. He was entirely divested of hypocrisy and dissimulation; he strictly kept his word, and spoke the truth publicly and privately, without apprehension, dreading only the reproaches of his own conscience, and the resentment of his Maker. On no occasion would he tell a lie himself, or even allow another to do it for him. When it was inconvenient for him to receive visitors, he would not order his servant, according to the fashionable mode, to say he was not at home, but made him tell any one who called, that he was in his room but could not see company. I remember he once excluded almost every one from him for a fortnight, expecting then a visit from a certain dignified person whom he did not wish to see.

It may naturally be supposed he was not well skilled in the science of flattery, often more useful than real science for a man's promotion in the world; for he could not say one thing, and think another, applaud that with his lips of which his heart disapproved. He was not fit, like a supple dependant, to soothe the vanity, or soften the crimes of the great: nor could he, by a tacit consent, or smiling rebuke, give countenance to vice. He openly declared his abhorrence of every mean and ungenerous deed, of every base compliance of principle for the sake of private advantage. As he would not admit of duplicity in himself, he could not bear it in others. He was remarkable indeed for a total disregard to his temporal interest, when it interfered with his duty; a virtue, it is said, not always prevalent among churchmen.

Yet he was sufficiently respectful to his superiors, ready to pay them every compliment they deserved, and grateful for the favours they conferred on him. His determination not to write against Dr. Clayton, bishop of Clogher,

who gave him the first living, though he disliked his religious opinions, and his lamenting his unhappy fate already mentioned, proceeded from the same laudable principle. He entertained, as might be expected, a grateful esteem and sincere affection for his worthy patron Dr. Garnet, the late bishop of Clogher, who was orthodox in his belief, and gentle and benevolent in his mind. His donations to the family of the Leslies, were owing to the friendship he experienced from old Mr. Leslie of Ahavea.

In his own friendships he was faithful and strenuous, always exerting the little interest he had in favour of young men of merit, or at least of those whom he supposed to have merit. For some of these he has been able to obtain curacies, and when he could not succeed, endeavoured to make them submit patiently to the disappointment. Upon their engaging in a ministerial employment, he usually gave them an advice how to conduct themselves. To a young man, who got a curacy in Dublin some years ago, I heard him give this salutary advice. "Your parishioners will invite you to their public entertainments, and will press you to drink intemperately; but don't do it for them, for if you do, they will afterward expose you." When a curate complained to him of not being rewarded in the church according to his merit, he strove to console him by this quotation from the psalmist. "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another." He was indeed warm and affectionate to his friends, and mild and forgiving to his enemies, if it were possible for such a man to have had an enemy.

His mode of communicating his advice was extremely agreeable to those who received it; for he was not one of those haughty advisers, who only wish, by assuming imperious dignity, to shew their own importance; his sole object being the good of the person to whom he gave the advice. His manner, conversation, and social qualities were indeed highly pleasing, and his wit in company so excellent, as to extort a smile from the gravest countenance; which caused his presence to be eagerly desired. While he lived in the country he often spent whole weeks together at the houses of his friends; and at his own lodgings,

particularly in Fintona, he usually had company every day he was at home, being remarkable for his hospitality. I was told at Pettigo, that the horses of some gentlemen who had paid him a visit there, when they had gone twelve miles off, immediately on getting loose came galloping back to his lodgings; which shews they were well used there.

It appears he was not one of those recluse sullen scholars that lock themselves up from society; his station requiring him, as he thought, to mix with the world. Having informed him once by letter that I spent my time entirely at my studies, he soon returned the following answer. "Do not sequester yourself wholly from mankind. From their vices, follies and dissipations you cannot keep at too great a distance; but by nature you must be social; and your gown obliges you by duty to be still more so, for the spirit of Christianity is a social spirit; and then in an age so infidel, so wicked, the Lord expects somewhat, let me say, perhaps a great deal from ****; but without speaking, reasoning, and now and then even reproving, there is nothing to be got out of him."

Yet his inclination for company never turned his thoughts aside from his devotions; his private and family prayers being constant and regular. At Fintona it was a custom with him to entertain his visitors for a short time by explaining a certain portion of Scripture in a clear simple manner, and making agreeable and improving remarks on it. When he had finished, he conversed on different subjects with his usual pleasantness; for his piety had nothing in it of gloominess or severity, and was free both from superstition and enthusiasm. He therefore could not relish the methodistic rants. Of a certain clergyman, who turned Methodist and quitted the church, he observed, that no one stood more in need of inspiration, for naturally he was a great blockhead.

Yet even a Methodist was not more sensible than he of the prevalence of wickedness in the world. I heard him once say in a large company, "The devil has more authority in this world than some people are apt to think; he is called in Scripture the god of this world, the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air, and accordingly disposes of many places of profit in it, bestowing

high offices on persons of his own choosing." Though he disliked faction, he was not blind to the corruptions of a court, and spoke with a just abhorrence of those men, who sell their country for gold.

The most of the little religion which remained in the world was possessed, he thought, by the fair sex. "The Turks," he said, "imagine women have no souls; but by their conduct we should suppose it more likely they have them than the men, for they take more care of them." He was remarkably fond of the company of the ladies, though no man could be more innocent with regard to sensual indulgences. It probably required extreme abstinence, and severe struggles in him to gain the entire mastery over his passions.

Having sold his library before he came to live constantly in Dublin, he was obliged then to borrow books, of which he got a great variety, and freely gave his opinion of those he read. After reading Tristram Shandy he could not, he said, for two or three days attend seriously to his devotion; it filled him with ludicrous ideas. Of a certain dignified author he remarked, that, though a man of learning, he always in his writings put the wrong end of the argument foremost, observing that an argument was like a dart, for if you put the wrong end foremost, it would not hit the object aimed at, but run into your own hand.

There was no living author he had so high an opinion of as Dr. Johnson, whom he called the greatest and best man of the age, and had his picture hung over the fire-side in the room in which he usually sat. "I have Johnson always before me (he often said) whom I look on as my master, and strive to imitate; when he dies, he'll not leave a man in these kingdoms of deep-thinking behind him." Johnson's known orthodoxy conduced somewhat to increase his good opinion of him. His own violence in this instance was reckoned by some among his defects; though he had a real esteem for any one who acted conscientiously, which he clearly exhibited by offering a part of his income to support Mr. Robertson, a perfect stranger to him, who resigned his living as he could not believe in the Trinity. He railed severely indeed against those clergymen who continue to enjoy the emoluments of an ecclesiastical bene-

ɔe, and yet disbelieve the doctrines of the church that aintains them.

When I told him once that I had been in company the ght before with a man who said he did not believe in hell, Well," he replied, " tell him the next time he says so, at he'll not believe in it, till he feels it; seeing is believing, ıt feeling has no fellow."

In a candid display of his character and manners it is ɔcessary to observe, that he was rather liable to be de-ɔived by the art of flatterers. He was apt to imagine, that ɔse who praised and complimented him, possessed more rtues than they could justly claim. This weakness, which as derived from the sincerity of his own mind, caused im often to have a good opinion of those, whom he found terward to be unworthy of his regard. A certain person polite address was once particularly attentive to him in ɔmpany, which pleased him so much, that he used to say ɔ was the sweetest and most agreeable young gentleman ɔ ever saw; but afterward, when he discovered him to be deceiver, he said of him, " he is but the shell of a man."

If you once lost his friendship, you could not easily re-ain it, for he usually suspected you ever after. In his old ge, he sometimes entertained unreasonable suspicions of ankind. When I observed to him a short time before his ath, that he had got fine cotton curtains to his bed, he plied, " the people who bought these expected I should ɔon die, and then they knew they would get them to them-ılves."

Having been appointed, on account of his services to ıe Magdalen Charity, one of its governors, he attended a ublic meeting, about 1785, where he found some ladies of reat consequence, who treated his opinion, he declared, on very occasion, with contempt; which made him resolve ɔ go near them no more, to which resolution he strictly ad-ered. The benefits conferred by him on this useful insti-ıtion entitled him, he thought, to more respect. Yet his uspicions in this instance were founded, I should think, ıther on imagination than reality.

It is remarkable, that in his old age he almost entirely ot the better of the hypochondriac complaints, to which he as so subject before. In the prime and vigour of life he

often imagined he was just going to die, when he had no bodily ailment; yet when he was seized with his last illness, he did not expect it would be the cause of his death. His method of getting rid of a cold was somewhat curious; he lay in bed and ate little or nothing, and thus drove it away by hunger. This bears some resemblance to what is mentioned by Lucian, of a poor man's frightening away a fever by gulping down water.

He was also not troubled in his old age with doubts about his salvation, and observed to a friend who mentioned this, that he was now too old to be disturbed by such gloomy apprehensions.

In the course of the narrative, a short account and separate character has been given of each of his works. It only remains to make some general observation on the whole. They discover him to have possessed strong natural powers, which were enriched with a complete knowledge both of sacred and profane literature. Had his taste been equal to his learning and imagination, or had he employed more care in polishing his compositions, they would certainly have been more agreeable, and of consequence more durable. But his arrangement is somewhat confused, and his style, though strong and masculine, is often harsh and obscure. It is however observable, that the style of his two last volumes is far superior to that of the other five. He seems at length to have been sensible of his defects in this particular, and has been tolerably fortunate in avoiding them. The style of the last is so different in point of perspicuity from that of the first volume, that if there did not appear a similarity in the mode of thinking, you could scarce suppose them to be both the production of the same author. The style of his private letters, which are remarkably instructive, is plain and unaffected; here he seems to throw aside his stilts, and to walk upon his feet with an easy equable carriage.

If his attempts at wit and irony be sometimes unsuccessful, yet he is scarce ever deficient in good sense, which he draws abundantly from his own natural fund, for he is no servile copier even of the thoughts of others. He is therefore entitled at least to the character of an original *writer*. His writings are also animated with an ardent

zeal for the happiness of his fellow-creatures. The subject on which he employed his pen is of a nature the most noble and excellent, either to prove the truth of divine revelation, or to point out to man the conduct that will render him acceptable to the great Author of his being. From the specimen of his ability in explaining the Scriptures exhibited in his Senilia, we have reason to lament that he did not write a commentary on that sacred volume. If he had, we may suppose he would not have been so tedious and unentertaining as the generality of our commentators, whose dulness and verbosity give us a distaste for a critical study of the Holy Scriptures.

Though he was so eminent for his pulpit eloquence, his productions in defence of revelation, and the exemplary sanctity of his private life, yet he remained, it has been shewn, at least twenty years a curate. At length he obtained, by powerful interposition, a small living from bishop Clayton in a wild part of the country; where probably he would have continued all his days, had not Providence placed Dr. Garnet in the see of Clogher, who was remarkable for promoting men distinguished for literary qualifications. In the Irish church, it is well known, that fortune or powerful relations are the chief requisites for preferment, and that learning and abilities are too often neglected and disregarded. Had Skelton been born in England, even with the disadvantage of his humble birth, it is allowed, he would have risen to a bishopric. But his being a native of Ireland, the condition of his parents, and the honest freedom of his language, contributed to prevent his advancement to ecclesiastical honours. It is to be lamented, that the merits of a poor Irish clergyman can hardly be so famed as to reach the royal ear, that lends so favourable an attention to literature in the English church.

The following panegyric on Mr. Skelton, taken from the Philosophical Survey of Ireland, may naturally be subjoined.

"Mr. Orr, published a volume of Sermons, which procured him the friendship of Hoadly, bishop of Winchester; they discover a free and original cast of thought, and are composed in a manly nervous style. The present bishop of Clogher has the honour of promoting him to an arch-

deaconry, when he governed the see of Ferns. And to the same excellent prelate Mr. Skelton owes his preferment.

"This gentleman though ungraduated, but as a Bachelor, by any of the universities, is the living glory of the Irish church. He has published five volumes, mostly in defence of revelation, which though ably written, shed but a secondary lustre on the character of this excellent person, to whom I have had the happiness of being introduced. His learning is almost universal, and his language uncommonly fluent and vigorous; nature formed him a poet, but a bishop prematurely ordained him a divine; and no sooner did he assume this function, than his feeling heart was penetrated by the nicest sense of duty. He resigned himself wholly to the service of his Master. Such a servant could not long escape notice; he became eminent; he was followed in London as a preacher. He dedicated two volumes of sermons to the citizens of that metropolis, at a time when he languished upon a curacy of 40*l.* a year;* but then he was as rich as he is now, for he knows no use of money, but to relieve distress. In one of those seasons of calamity, which neglect of tillage in this country renders so frequent, he sold his books, his only worldly goods wherein he took delight, to buy bread for the poor. He is now advancing towards seventy, yet he preserves an uncommon share of vivacity. If he sometimes descends into the ludicrous, his flashes of wit keep the table in a roar. His powers of description are beyond what I could have conceived; he has a stock of imagination sufficient to set up ten modern tragic poets. Had he been educated and lived in England, a stage little enough for his great abilities, he would have long since obtained the first niche in the temple of fame; now he is known only in Ireland, and by a few inquisitive men elsewhere."

A marble tomb-stone has been placed over him at the expense of Miss Leslie, whom he appointed his residuary legatee, with the following inscription, the composition, it is said of the Rev. Robert Burrows, junior; fellow of Trinity College, Dublin.

* This is a mistake; for he had the living of Pettigo at that time.

" Beneath this stone are deposited the remains of
The Reverend Philip Skelton,
Prebendary of Donacavy in the Cathedral of Clogher,
Who departed this life on the 4th day of May, 1787,
In the 59th year of his Ministry, and 81st of his age.
Liberally endowed by Providence with intellectual
Perfections,
He did not suffer them to lie waste through Inactivity,
Nor did he pervert them by misdirection.
His understanding he habituated to attentive
Reflection,
Invigorating it by exercise and enriching it with
Information.
And pursuing the noblest ends by means the best
Adapted,
He laboured industriously to promote the happiness
Of Mankind,
By advancing the influence of the Christian Religion.
His arguments evinced the reasonableness of its
Doctrines;
While his example shewed at once
The practicability and amiableness of its precepts;
For
As his opinions were orthodox his manners were
Primitive.
His conversation was candid and unreserved;
For he harboured no thought which required
Concealment.
His preaching was forcible and dignified,
Impressing on his hearers the rightful authority of
Virtue,
And with indignant elocution and nervous diction,
Holding out her Adversaries
To contempt and detestation.
Pious without superstition, and zealous without
Bigotry;
His life was practical devotion,
And his controversies the earnest efforts of
Philanthropy,
Leading infidels to truth, and sinners to salvation.

With a heart which felt for the distresses of the Indigent,
He had a hand still open to relieve them,
Denying himself even moderate gratifications
That he might more liberally provide for the Necessities of others.
Without ambition he acquired celebrity,
And without ostentation he long continued to enjoy It.
A friend to the poor, an ornament to the church,
Admired for his talents and revered for his virtues,
He was at length called to the rewards of a Patriarchal life,
In the immediate presence of that God,
Whose name he had worshipped with such piety,
And whose word he taught with success."

CONTROVERSIAL DISCOURSES:

CHIEFLY ON THE

EVIDENCES

AND THE

FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.—MARK xvi. 16.

[FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE YEAR 1754.]

THE

PREFACE:

ADDRESSED TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND, AND REVEREND,

THE

CLERGY

OF THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

RIGHT REVEREND, AND REVEREND GENTLEMEN,

SUCH, ever since the Reformation hath been the candour of the church, wherein you at present worthily preside; and such her wisdom in some instances, and piety in others, that her doors have never been unreasonably shut against any man, nor her Christian charity and indulgence denied to those whom their prejudices have forbidden to enter. It is no wonder therefore, if, actuated by dispositions so ingenuous, and a spirit so truly Christian, she hath always perused, approved, and applauded, all well-executed performances, howsoever foreign to herself their authors may have been, in birth, education, communion, and even principles.

Imboldened by these reflections, the writer of the following discourses, who, being of your own communion, labours to defend those principles you deem fundamental, in this light, thinks himself secure of your acceptance and patronage; provided the many defects, too easily discoverable in his performances by judges so very discerning, do not forbid your approbation; provided also it shall appear, notwithstanding all the tracts and discourses hitherto published on the same subjects, that the times call for new endeavours of this kind.

As to the defects of these performances, thus addressed to you, it is feared, they will be found too numerous, and too considerable, to countenance the boldness of the author in this application. He is, nevertheless, on a review of what he hath written, encouraged to apply; because the objections to which his work may be liable, are, he hopes, sufficiently balanced not only by the goodness of his intention, but also by the perspicuity and conciseness, wherewith he hath endeavoured to draw together, as in so many focal points, the lights necessary for the illustration and proof of each controverted fundamental, which are either too much dissipated, or too much obscured, by the terms of art, and prolix reasonings, of abler, but more voluminous controvertists. He hath likewise introduced, throughout these discourses, a variety of new arguments, which he hopes, may merit your attention, whatsoever they may do as to your approbation. And farther, as it was his chief aim finally to decide, if possible, the debates under each important topic, to the satisfaction of every truly candid inquirer: he hath, first, endeavoured to prove the Scriptures to be the real word of God; secondly, to shew how as such, they ought to be read and understood; and lastly, to clear up the several disputed points, by pure unsophisticated passages of Scripture, not darkened or perverted by the arbitrary and artful expositions of men; but taken in their first obvious and naked sense, presuming that God knew how to write intelligibly to a plain well-meaning understanding.

But still it may be said, and it is owned, with no small shew of reason, that controversy, of all things, hath proved most prejudicial to religion; that nothing new can be urged on the essentials of Christianity; that the world is really overstocked with sermons and religious tracts of all kinds, more especially on every disputed topic; and that, so far as such performances are capable of doing good, those in being may suffice, inasmuch as all that genius and judgment could contribute to give them variety, perfection, and force, is exhausted in those already published.

It is true, that controversies, in some respects, have greatly hurt religion; but it is as true, that, in others, they have done it infinite service.

If the corrupters of our faith, and the opposers of truth, ıave somewhat darkened the one, and staggered the other, n such minds as had a previous tendency to error or infi-. lelity, the loss, in regard to these men, is the less to be re- ;retted ; because their faith(scarcely deserving the name) nust have been of little use to themselves, had they re- ained it, since it was capable of being shaken by argu- nents levelled directly against the clearest dictates of livine revelation. An understanding, prepared to yield ɔn an attack of this kind, would have yielded to its own ınassisted perversity. But on the other hand, hath not the ǎith of the ingenuous been greatly strengthened by the ıoble apologies for Christianity, and its essential doctrines, vherewith the truth hath, in all ages of the church, been ıupported? Is it not an unspeakable satisfaction to see, hat the creed of a Christian after a thorough scrutiny, can ıtand the test, not only of impartial reason, but of every ɔther attack, howsoever artfully or cruelly carried on ıgainst its adherents? If the teachers of error have, by livine permission, done some hurt; surely the sowers of ıacred truth have, by divine appointment, done infinitely nore good, in defending that 'which was sown' from being caught away out of our hearts by those fowls of the air,' vhich 'the prince of the air' hath always employed in that nystery of iniquity.

It is a gross mistake to suppose, that nothing new may ɔe said on the fundamental articles of our faith. They are ·eally inexhaustible, and the Scriptures, wherein they are ·evealed, is a bottomless abyss of wisdom. The following liscourses may, perhaps, satisfy the learned reader, in a ·ariety of instances, that both assertions are true, without eading him from the plain path of common sense. But, ɔe this as it will, it is humbly presumed, no wise or faithful Christian will censure him, who endeavours to give a new ınd satisfactory answer to every new attack; and, as often ıs the old objections are revived, searches the armoury of he church for those weapons, wherewith the like assailants ıave been foiled in former times. To rub the rust of anti- ıuity, and of the schools, from these; to give them a new ·dge; and to wield and point them with skill against the ɔresent adversaries of our faith, is a work of no small

service and merit. To be attacked, and not defended, is the same as to be defeated. The adversary does, and will, attack: it follows therefore, that we must either defend, or submit, and give a triumph to men who will not fail to vaunt it, to the great emolument of a scheme and cause we still think pernicious.

No one thing gives the declared enemies of Christianity so great an advantage against it, as our scandalous divisions on the essential articles of faith. Now, though these divisions are by no means owing to the obscurity of revelation, but to the manifest obliquity, both of understanding and heart, in those pretended Christians, who, through pride, prejudice, and other vices, are not to be concluded by Scripture; yet, as long as these continue, the enemies of our religion will always charge them to the account of revelation; to that of reason, which they conceitedly adore, as all-sufficient, they never will. They will be as far from charging our disputes in points too important to be obscurely revealed, on any irregularity of the human heart, wherein, blinded by a manifest sympathy with the intestine perverters of Christianity, they will see no corruption, no undue influence over the judgment of a deistical Christian.

To believe, as the Deists do, that our fundamental differences are owing to the obscurity of revelation, is to give up the cause of Christianity; for we cannot believe this, and yet believe, that the Scriptures are the word of God, without a blasphemous denial of both his wisdom and goodness. That the contentions therefore of Christians, in regard to the very essentials of the religion they profess, may be no longer turned into an infamous reflection on that religion, it is necessary our sentiments on the fundamentals should be a little more conformable; in short, that we should have but one creed, and that this creed should be as ancient as the church of Christ; because the conformity of any one age with itself is not more requisite to this purpose, than the conformity of all ages with one another. He, whose labours are aimed at this end, serves the cause of Christianity as effectually, as he who endeavours to defend it against a general attack; first, because intestine dissensions are worse than foreign wars; and secondly, because

It is in vain to apologize for Christianity, till we shew what Christianity is, and have made it evident, that we have a common Christianity. If the new Jerusalem continues as much embroiled within itself, as the old, it is easy to foresee the success of its besiegers. The candid part of mankind now plainly perceive, the Deists can no longer, either maintain their own principles, nor any otherwise materially wound Christianity, than through the dissensions of its adherents. The Scriptures, they say, and we own it, command us 'to stand fast in the faith,' and tell us, 'the faith is one;' but this, they farther urge, cannot be the command of God, since the same Scriptures, from which we extract our various systems of faith, are found, in fact, and by experience, to be either too dark or too undeterminate, to give mankind any one system. Hence they insist, that 'the unity of faith,' spoken of in Scripture is unattainable; and consequently, the command, that all should stand fast in one faith impracticable and unreasonable. To prove that the Scripture is sufficiently decisive on the great articles of the religion it reveals, and therefore that the command is reasonable, and worthy of God, is the chief purport of the following discourses. How far the author hath succeeded in his attempt, you, gentlemen, will be the best able to judge. If by his poor endeavours it shall appear, to the satisfaction of a reader content to follow him through a work so short and summary, that the Scriptures are sufficiently clear and determinate on the great points of faith, though controverted among the professors of Christianity; the world will then know where to look for the source of its own disputes; and will be forced to find it in the violence of its own passions, which it will not subdue; in the blindness of its own prejudices, which it will not suspect; and in the imbecility of its own reason, which, though men may idolize to the full extent of their vanity, hath suffered them to differ as widely in all other branches of knowledge, wherewith interest or inclination hath had any opportunity of interfering. As to the command enforcing unanimity in the faith, the disobedience, in that respect, of persons professing Christianity, ought no more to derogate from the reasonableness of the injunction, than their disobedience to the decalogue is allowed to do from the goodness and

utility of its precepts. Indeed experience hath made it but too manifest, that the different degrees of latitude, taken by the professors of our religion, either in thinking or acting, proceed from the different degrees of indulgence, wherewith they treat their constitutional tempers, their own natural inclinations and aversions; and that they call that freedom of thinking, whatsoever it is, which licenses their liberty of acting as they please. If variety of interpretations, more or less remote from the simple interpretation of the words, are put on the doctrinal part of revelation; variety of interpretations, more or less deviating from the strictness of the expressions, are also put on its moral precepts. But whereas there is no receiving the doctrines of Christianity in their genuine purity, without, at the same time, receiving its injunctions in their utmost severity; a latitude of interpretation must therefore be found out, which may bend the former to our own reason, and the latter to our own inclination; and then, but not till then, we are our own teachers and lawgivers, our own masters and governors.

Whether the world, according to the fastidious maxim of some men, is really overstocked with sermons, &c. or not, the clergy, nevertheless, go on making new ones every day, and preaching them, on a supposition, it seems, that they are not absolutely unnecessary. If the neglect of them only is considered, all that are already in being may be burnt, without a very sensible loss, at least to the objectors, who would disrelish even a novel, were it entitled a sermon. But if the expediency of such compositions, as means of instruction and reformation, is to be estimated by the ignorance, the errors, and vices, of mankind, it may be modestly enough presumed, we are not, to this day, sufficiently furnished. Are the clergy, because one part only in four of the seed falls on good ground, and the other three on bad, to sow no more? or, in case the methods, whereby conviction and persuasion were effected in one age, do not succeed in another, of a quite different turn and genius, are our teachers to shut up their mouths, and lay aside their pens, rather than attempt the great work they are intrusted with, in a method more suitable to the present times? Epictetus tells us, every thing hath two handles; one,

whereby it may be easily seized and managed; and another, of which the contrary is true. The same may be said of every man; nay, of every age of men. Two centuries ago, there was no convincing any man, although on points that now seem too obvious to need a demonstration, but by mode and figure; whereas, at present, an argument in that form would be taken for a spell by some, and for a nonsensical piece of affectation by others. We, who are old, can remember the time, when it was customary with the clergy successfully 'to persuade men by the terrors of the Lord;' but the ears of this age are too delicate, or our consciences too raw, to endure with patience an application so caustic; and therefore we say to our teachers, as the Israelites did to Isaiah and the other prophets, 'Prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits.' But what saith God to that prophet, in reference to this very people? 'Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.' How exactly parallel is our case to that of the Israelites! We call for smooth things, and deceits, as they did; but where is the trumpet loud enough to rouse us, unless that which shall raise the dead? For some time past, not only the controversy about morality, but the disputes also between Christian and Deist, and between the Orthodox and Arians, have been shamefully abandoned to the futilities of a feebler philosophy, than even the false wisdom exploded by Christianity of old. The dictates of God himself have been preposterously submitted to the weak reasonings, and even to the vicious prejudices of men, pretending to believe the Scriptures, although they suffer the contents of the sacred volumes to interfere, at best, but as seconds to their own opinions. In the mean time, every one, having dressed out religion in a garb of his own fancying, hath given his opposites an occasion to tear it in pieces, while they pretended to tear away the disguise only. Out of this confusion have arisen, first, doubts and diffidence; from thence infidelity, and a contempt of all things sacred; and from thence again, such a universal scene of pollution and wickedness, as shocks the eyes of one, who is but moderately criminal, to survey: for what is to be seen in it, but kingdoms given

up to faction and ambition; estates, to gaming and sharping; oaths, to bribery and corruption; and the consciences and persons of both sexes, to prostitutions too flagitious to be named? 'Shall not God visit for these things?' or, till he does, shall not his ministers cry aloud against them, as well in the principle as the practice, if, speaking in a lower voice, they have not been heard? Shall they not 'set their faces like a flint,' and whet their words to daggers, when an age like this is to be reproved? Will splitting of hairs, or going half the way, with heretics, a method too long tried, resettle us all in the truth? Or will feebly moralizing on the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice, in pursuit of the present affected practice, reform a generation so hardened in wickedness?

No, Gentlemen; such expedients, you are sensible, can never answer the ends proposed. Success is not to be hoped for on all occasions, from the pursuit of any one method. If there is any good to be done by preaching, although the principles are not to be changed, yet surely the manner must be diversified, according as the genius and disposition of mankind vary. The errors and vices of one age differ so widely, either in substance or circumstance, from those of another, that to reason always on the same points, and from the same topics; or to attempt persuasion, on all occasions, in the same strain; is to talk wide of those we address to; is to speak to them in a language they either do not understand, or feel. Is there a possibility, I mean with any prospect of success, of accommodating the same species of admonition to those who tremble, and to those who presume? Or, is a debate, especially on a religious subject, to be managed in the same manner with a modest and candid inquirer after truth, and with a still impudent, though detected, sophister? We should, I humbly conceive, neither presumptuously dictate to the former, nor meanly waste our arguments on the latter. The first merits all our affection, be his present opinions never so detestable in our eyes. But it is our duty to drag out the last from the coverture of his impious arts, and to scourge him with scorpions in the sight of his deluded admirers, that, if they did not choose him for a guide, because they previously knew him to be a deceiver, they may learn to

abhor and fly from him, as they would do from a person infected with the plague.

As to men of but moderate talents for controversy, who, although unhappily entangled in the new opinions, do nevertheless still retain an honest regard for the truth, ought they not to hear and read, as well on the one side as the other? Since their modesty makes them the disciples of others, it ought, one should think, to convince them, they may possibly have made a wrong choice of teachers. Such men as, for want of sufficient literature, are unable to go through with a work so very difficult, even to the learned, and therefore must, in some measure, depend on others, ought undoubtedly to listen with the one ear as well as with the other, and to 'try all things,' that they may, in the end, 'hold fast that which is good.'

They may easily judge, whom they ought to follow, by the fruits of their instructions. Is not virtue banished, wherever piety hath been extinguished? And what remains of piety are to be found, where the new opinions have taken place? It is evident to every common observer, that respect for the holy Scriptures, for the sacraments, for the sabbath, and for the sanctions of religion, hath retired from the minds of mankind, in proportion as the novel doctrines have advanced; and that dissolution of manners hath followed the dissipated faith, and licentious principles, of our new apostles. Their disciples need be referred no farther than to their own breasts, for an experimental proof of this. Why then will men, still retaining some tincture of a good meaning, give up their minds to leaders so long accustomed to treat their own understandings with pernicious novelties, that it is manifestly become unsafe to be within the obnoxious air of their conversation, which infects as fast as it is breathed? Avicenna makes mention of a girl, who, having been fed, from her infancy, on certain species of nutritive poison, came at length to have a constitution incapable of bearing any other kind of food, extremely distempered in itself, and contagious to all who approached her. He does not tell us, however, that she, like the intellectual plagues above-mentioned, was fond of a crowd, or shewed any industry to infect others. In this particular, our new teachers rather resemble the Talus of

Eustathius, a man made wholly of brass, who had a trick of going into the fire, and staying there till he was as hot as that could make him, and then rushing out to embrace those whom he would destroy.

Beside the dangerous tendency of their principles, these venders of new opinions shew themselves to be very unfit instructors for a well-meaning man, by the disingenuous artifices and double dealing wherewith they make all their proselytes. They declare, in the most solemn manner, for any system of principles, though never so contrary to their real sentiments, if place and profit happen to be annexed to it; and then, without the least scruple, employ all the credit that place can give them, to inculcate a contrary system, but under such disguises as give them, in the eyes of the undiscerning, some shew of believing and acting in conformity to their declarations. Base enough to do this, they have also the assurance publicly to defend it when done, and to repeat it, in the face of mankind. Shall a man of honest intentions give himself up to these mercenary, these self-detected deceivers, and refuse to hear or read any thing, but that which they think fit to recommend? It is impossible. The partisans of a known impostor are always impostors themselves.

For men, thus deceiving, or wishing to be deceived, the following Discourses were neither written, nor published; but for those only who honestly look for the truth, and prefer a painful ruffle, at the entrance, to the most pleasing doze in error. The Author, conscious that the principles he maintains are true and necessary; that the Almighty Being not only authorizes, but prescribes the defence of them; and that the dignity of a cause so highly noble and important merits the service of much greater talents than hath been bestowed on him; writes therefore freely and boldly, at the full stretch of those he hath.

However, he submits his performances, first, to you, Gentlemen, and then to every other sensible and honest peruser; earnestly wishing, the abilities had been equal to the spirit that gave them birth; and humbly hoping, that, while the dullest treatises on the side of heresy and irreligion are devoured, with a kind of greediness, these, which speak for God and truth, may possibly meet with ac-

ceptance; especially in case they shall happen to seem not less rational, less spirited, or entertaining.

He will bless God for your approbation, Gentlemen, if he shall be so happy as to obtain it; and will esteem it the greatest comfort of his life. But as to the censures of the dishonest, of whom alone he writes with severity, he will consider them as applause; believing what he says hath pierced to the quick when the hardened dissembler is forced to complain.

To conclude this already too tedious address, I most earnestly beseech God to bless and preserve that church, whereof he hath shewn himself so long remarkably the protector, and in nothing more, than in giving you to be its pastors. May he make it, by your ministry, fruitful in faith and good works, for the sake of Him who purchased it with his blood. I am,

Right reverend, and reverend Gentlemen,

Your most sincere well-wisher,

And most faithful, and dutiful, humble servant,

PHILIP SKELTON.

CONTROVERSIAL DISCOURSES,

&c. &c.

DISCOURSE I.

HOW THE TRUE RELIGION MAY BE DISTINGUISHED FROM SUCH AS ARE FALSE.

1 THESS. v. 21.

Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.

THIS precept of the Apostle contains sound and useful advice, in regard to all branches of knowledge, and all kinds of choice. He does but throw a die for his own happiness, who neglects the former part of; and he who acts against the latter, hath no right to complain of the thief and the robber: but the force and beauty of the precept lies in the connexion between its parts. He can never be rationally tenacious of his choice, who hath not made it on due examination; because he can never be sure it is judiciously made, if chance for others have made it for him; and firmly to adhere to that which he neither is nor can be sure is right, is obstinacy and folly.

As, however, the Apostle intended this most excellen piece of advice for a religious purpose only; and as our Saviour, with the same view, says, 'Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?' we are to interpret both as an appeal to the sense and understandings of mankind, in relation to the evidence whereby one religion may be distinguished, as true and genuine, from others that are false and spurious. Be the evidence of Christianity what it will, its Author had the confidence to submit it to the reason, nay, to the very senses, of all men. 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. If I do not the works of my Father,

believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works. Go and shew John the things ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk,' &c. It is plain from hence, that Christ appealed to our senses and reason, in order to the full conviction of such as should believe on him; and desired this conviction in his disciples, to the end that, having found the religion he preached to be true and good, they might 'hold it fast,' as the Apostle advises.

There is no one now, I believe, who will dispute the justness of this rule, whether he submits to the authority of those who delivered it, or not. Every one must allow the rule to be good in itself. Yet what all are ready to grant in speculation, very few are willing to reduce to practice; I mean in matters of religion. In other things, indeed, as if they were of more value, we use all the sense and reason we have. If we are sick, we are not so attached to the name of a drug, or a physician, as not to postpone either to a better, for the sake of health. If we are to purchase an estate, we examine, without any manner of prejudice, the goodness and extent of the lands, and what they may be set for; nor will we close the bargain, till we have the opinion of the best lawyer concerning the title. We make it no objection to his judgment, that his name is spelled after this or that manner. If we buy any piece of goods, its properties are thoroughly examined. If we sell one, the money is not received, till it is carefully viewed and inspected. We shew surprising sharpness, and go to an hair's breadth, in our disputes about property; and if they run to a lawsuit, the very father of lies and deceits must be employed against us, or no advantage can be taken of us. But examine us in religious matters, and behold, we are almost idiots. Here we know little or nothing; can give no reason for what we maintain, or, for the most part, a very weak one; are destitute of common sense and understanding. Here names, not things, are received, are loved, are contended for. Here names, not things, are rejected, hated, and even persecuted in those who adhere to them, not because we are sensible of any material difference between their persuasion and our own, but because they spell theirs with other letters, than we employ in the name of ours. Truth and error are here

alike to us in themselves, and differ only as they get the start of each other through our education or passions. If education predominates, the most knowing son takes up contentedly with, often adheres tenaciously to, a religion handed down to him by the most stupid father; and never goes farther than the herald's office for his creed. If his passions or affections have the ascendant, his religion, instead of being a tie, according both to the nature of the thing, and the etymology of the word, must be converted into a licence, that it may countenance what it should correct, and bring his conscience to second his will, as that does his appetites and desires. He must adhere to the religion of his father, though it was evidently the cause of blindness, cruelty, and wickedness, in him; or he must have a religion of his own, because he is determined to take greater liberties than his father's principles could warrant. In these ways of choosing, or rather stumbling on, a religion, judgment and reason are not suffered to interfere, but are reserved for matters of greater consequence, such as the choice of a horse, a cook, or a strumpet.

And yet, if it is of any moment to a man, whether he shall be good and happy, or wicked and miserable, it must equally concern him, not only to be religious, but to make a wise choice of a religion; for it is not a whit more sure, that there is a God who made us, than it is, that he made us 'to serve him in spirit and in truth,' and in so doing to be completely happy. He who believes there is no God, whatever he does with the natural world, must look on the intellectual as a moral chaos, wherein if there is a right and a wrong in actions, there is no reason for doing the right, and avoiding the wrong; no law, no duty, because no account of what is done. But he who believes there is a God, must believe that whatsoever is good is true, inasmuch as a Creator of infinite goodness and truth can no more be supposed to have set them in opposition to each other in the nature of things, than to feel them opposite in himself. Now, that religion is good, we know by experience, because man can be neither good nor happy without it. We know also, that no man can subsist long out of society; nor society, without religion; so that a religion which hath any truth in it at all, must be better than no religion. As therefore religion is not only a

good, but a necessary good, we must conclude, it is a great and necessary truth. Indeed man is under as great a necessity of having religion, as he is of having food; and of having a true religion, as of having wholsome food.

Some men give themselves a marvellous liberty of speaking on this subject. They are so good indeed as to own religion may be useful, but deny its necessity; and as to the choice of a religion, they say, it is of no great consequence, because God may be served, and man saved, in any religion. As truth and goodness can never be separated, so this detestable way of talking hath as small a proportion of the one, as of the other, in it. Could God have been indifferent whether there should be any connexion between himself and his intelligent creatures? Or could he have judged a connexion less than necessary, at least to us, who, if separated from him, must be miserable? And how otherwise can we be connected with him, than by piety, devotion, and duty? Of his infinite goodness he gave us being; but being, without this union, must have been a curse, instead of a blessing. Religion therefore is necessary. And though the true religion is not absolutely necessary to our subsistence in this world, experience teaching us, that society may subsist with an erroneous religion; yet if there is a heaven, and if the purification of our nature, and the love of God, are necessary to fit us for that heaven, then the true religion, which alone can produce these excellent effects in us, must be necessary to our great, our lasting happiness. Besides, if our religion should consist in superstitious and wicked opinions, and in the worship of false gods, can we suppose that God should look with as favourable an eye on us as he would do, in case our principles were conformable to truth, and all our homage paid to himself alone? Could happiness be obtained without virtue, or virtue acquired under the influence of worship paid to a wrong object, and essentially erroneous in its practical principles; and could all this be as easily and safely done under these circumstances, as with the assistance of true religion; then indeed I should think the choice of a religion a matter of little moment to us. But suppositions like these are too chimerical to deserve a farther notice.

Man is so made, that he cannot help being anxious to

obtain what is good; but he often mistakes the kinds, the degrees, nay, the very reality of good, pursuing one kind of good by means proper to the attainment of another; pursuing the less in preference to the greater; and, what is worse, pursuing real evil under the appearance of good. To remedy these mischiefs, from whence all sin and misery proceed, the best way is to make a thorough inquiry after the chief good, which is God; and after the right means of arriving at that good, which is true religion. That man is truly wise, who, in order to this most useful and most important of all inquiries, banishes his prejudices, silences his passions, and, following his reason steadily, prays to God, that his reason may not mistake, nor miss of, its aim; and who, when he thinks he hath attained his end, which, in the use of such a method, he can hardly fail of, neither so far wrongs his own judgment, or God's assistance, as to withhold his heart, and his affections, from the fruits of an inquiry so anxiously pursued.

However, that an honest inquirer of this sort may have a sure path to go in, we will lay down a few rules, which, if followed, must direct him to the great truth he seeks for; and in so doing, shall not so much endeavour to shew him, what is the true religion, as how to find it out himself.

Let the first rule be, that as by our senses we apprehend things sensible, and by our reason come to the knowledge of things demonstrable; and have no other way, either of receiving information, or trying the truth of that information; so we must never receive a religion that contradicts sense and reason.

It is no objection to this rule, that our senses may be deceived, or that we may reason wrong, provided we fairly and freely make the utmost use of both; for nothing more can be required of us, in order to the attainment of knowledge in any kind or degree, than a full exercise of the powers and faculties bestowed on us. But we may presume these cannot fail us in the attainment of knowledge so absolutely necessary to us, as that of religion; because, if it is so necessary, the lights, whereby the true religion may be distinguished from such as are false, must be sufficiently clear and strong to be apprehended by the faculties given us for that very purpose. If, however, there is, in respect

to any man, a failure either of the lights afforded, or the faculties bestowed, we know proportionable allowances will be made; for his happiness cannot possibly depend on the use of means not put within his power.

But to prevent a wrong use of this rule, it must be observed, that a point may be true and rational, which reason cannot account for; and that we may have full evidence of its truth, at the same time that we cannot shew demonstrably how it is consistent, either in itself, or with other known truths. For instance; we may have sufficient reason to think, God is both infinitely just, and infinitely merciful, although we can by no means demonstrate, how he can shew himself infinite in both, with regard to transgressors. Again, it may be matter of certainty to us, that God is infinitely good and communicative; and yet, that one half of eternity passed before any creature was brought into being; I say one half, because every moment of duration divides eternity into two equal parts. These two propositions are evidently true, and therefore reconcilable in themselves; although it exceeds the strength of our minds, and probably of all created minds, to shew their consistency. This caution, when duly considered, will be found necessary to prevent our running into downright Atheism; for there is no religion, indeed no kind of knowledge which can so approve itself to reason, as to be perfectly accounted for by us, in all its parts, results, and consequences. Every thing knowable is self-evident, demonstrable, or probable, for a few steps; beyond which if it is pursued, it becomes unaccountable, and reduces all our boasted knowledge to doubt and paradox. Hence it may be expected, that religion, whether styled natural, or revealed, may have its mysteries, as well as physics, or any other branch of knowledge; nay, rather, because its object is infinitely more incomprehensible, and its operations more remote from human apprehension.

These things premised, it is the business of an ingenuous inquirer to try the truth of each religion by the rule laid down; and if he finds it sets forth any thing palpably absurd or inconsistent, that is, any thing, to which his senses, or his reason, can safely give the lie, he is to reject it as unworthy of his assent. Now this will not be so difficult a matter, as may at first be apprehended; because there neither

are, nor never were, any religions in the world but five; namely, Deism, Judaism, Mahometism, Christianity, and Polytheism; and because the leading principles of these, from whence they have their denominations, are easily known, and as easily tried by a truly candid and thinking mind. They cannot all be right and true; nay, none but one of them can deserve those epithets; for each is utterly inconsistent with, and contrary to, all the rest. And that some one of them is the true religion, we must conclude; or else conclude, that God hath afforded mankind no true religion. But if one of them is the truth, and the rest imposition, the truth must be glaringly evident to a candid inquirer; or otherwise God hath offered us the truth, and withheld the evidence, or means of distinguishing that truth from error, which is a flat contradiction. But as it must be owned God hath not made this most valuable of all acquisitions so easy, even to a candid inquirer, as not to ask some pains; so we must insist he hath no more reason to complain of this, than of the difficulty he finds in all other useful attainments, which almost in every thing, but religion, bears proportion to the benefits accruing from them; whereas in that, the attainment, although requiring some pains, is easy, and the benefits immense. Let him take as much pains to find out the true religion, as he does to acquire a fortune, which I think is not quite so valuable, and then it will be time enough to hear his account of the matter, both as to the difficulty and success. But as I am confident the investigation of true religion is by no means so difficult as the acquisition of a fortune, in the ordinary way of business, I will come upon easier terms with him, and only desire him to be at the same trouble on this account that he undergoes in one East-India voyage, and I will venture to promise success to a man so candid and rational. If indeed a man were blessed with ever so large a portion of abilities and candour, but not with proportionable thirst or diligence for the inquiry; he may, after all, have as fair a chance to live and die in religious ignorance, as the most stupid bigot. This most inestimable gift of God, will not drop into his mouth at every yawn. However, I must take the liberty to tell him, he hath neither abilities nor candour beyond those of a fool, if he does not think 'wisdom as well worth seeking for, as

silver; as well worth searching for, as hid treasures;' if he does not think 'the merchandise of it better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold; if he does not think it more precious than rubies, and' incomparably 'better than all other things he can desire.' I will farther venture to tell him, he hath not discernment enough to distinguish between the most evident truth, and the most palpable falsehood, if he cannot previously distinguish between this truth. The right religion is infinitely preferable to all other acquisitions; and this falsehood, wealth, or worldly honour, is better worth the labour and pains of a pursuit, than the true religion.

But as it would be a gross folly to make a long journey for what we want, before we have considered whether we may have it at home; so every man ought, in prudence, first to apply his rule to the religion of his own country, that, if he finds they tally, he may rest contented where his education placed him; and not giddily mope after that truth, which he hath left at his back. If he finds they do not, it is then more his business, than any thing else in the world can be, to look carefully about him, and try other religions by the same rule. He is never to be satisfied with himself, till he finds one that fits it exactly; for one there certainly is that will fit it, if it is really and truly reason, not passion, prejudice, conceit, or whim, tricked out in the garb of reason. But in case his rule is drawn from any of these, thus speciously disguised, he will not be far to seek for a religion that may please him; for of those I have mentioned, some one or other cannot fail to be agreeable; or, supposing none of them should, he may easily invent a new one for himself that shall, in all points, hit his humour to a tittle, and sit as easy as his heart can wish.

But, if he is a truly rational inquirer, he will embrace no religion that makes his own nature, which he would instruct and reform, the rule of his principles and actions; no religion that assigns a certain period to its own continuance, and yet pretends to subsist seventeen hundred years after that period is out; no religion that plans itself on ambition or avarice, and makes rapine and slaughter meritorious in the sight of God; no religion that sets up more gods than one, and makes a largess of its favours to the adoration of

adulterers and murderers, perhaps to devils. No, he cannot rationally close with any religion that does not,

According to my second rule, evidently prove itself to come from God, from the Almighty, the infinitely wise and good God.

As God is the sole object, so he must be the only author, of the true religion; for it can be nothing else than the manifestation of himself, and his will. It can terminate in nothing else, and therefore can be derived from nothing else, but him. Here the first rule must be brought forward, and added to this, that his sense and reason may enable the inquirer to distinguish between the genuine signs of divine original, and the counterfeit.

That religion which cannot stand the first trial, is not to be admitted to a new one, under this second rule. But if it appears to have nothing absurd, or unreasonable, in it, there is then such a presumption in its favour, as merits a farther examination, and that is all; for although it may be rational, it may nevertheless be but of human invention; and though free from absurdity, as far as it goes, may however be defective in some necessary article; which defect may not be perceived, till the whole is thoroughly examined; but, as soon as it is perceived, ought to condemn it, because that religion, which claims God for its author, must effectually subvert its own claim, if it is not, in all respects, particularly in point of authority, instruction, and efficacy, perfectly well qualified to answer his end in giving it.

Now a religion that comes from God, must, I apprehend, have these signs of its original; antiquity, miracles, edification, and power. There may be others; but these will serve sufficiently to distinguish it from all religions of human invention.

First, as to antiquity; it is certain no religion can claim God for its author, if it is not near as old as the creation; because a religion coming much later into the world, cannot be rationally regarded as necessary; for if it were, why was it not earlier communicated? How can we suppose the infinitely gracious Being should so long have withheld from mankind the necessary means of reformation and happiness? This argument I deduce, not from any obligation lying on God to communicate religion to us at all, but from our wants;

and his free goodness. But as we always stood in need of religion, although unequally in the different ages of the world, so the true religion must have been given from the beginning, although perhaps imparted by degrees, as men wanted, or could receive and record it. If God thought fit to give us a religion at all, why not to the first men as well as us? Or rather, why not to their posterity through them? As there is all the reason in the world to believe the race of mankind sprung from a common parent, so it is equally reasonable to believe, that the knowledge of God, and our duty to him and one another, were imparted to that parent, in order to be by him transmitted to his posterity; first, because he wanted it as much as others; and secondly, because he had it in his power to propagate it as fast, and as far, as his own offspring. No other man could, at least so conveniently, or so uniformly, hand it to all mankind, as their common parent. The remains of religion found in all ages and nations of the world, though ever so dark and barbarous, and the notoriety of the fact, that every man was, and still is, taught somewhat of religion by his parents, or others, prove that this knowledge came to us through the first man, because otherwise some nations, inhabiting islands, or parts of the continent, sequestered for many ages from commerce and communication with the rest of mankind, might have been wholly untinctured with it. But no nation hath ever yet been discovered, among whom it is not believed, that there is some superior being, who ought some way or other to be worshipped; nay, among whom the practice of sacrifices, a thing that could not possibly have been of human invention, is not, under one form or other, observed. This proves the antiquity of religion, so far as it is right and rational; so far as it is otherwise, we may be sure it is the produce of human invention.

There can be but one true religion; and therefore we may take it for granted, the God of truth never gave any other, whatsoever additions or alterations he might have made in it, according as times and occasions required. All religions of later date than the first age of the world, so far as they are conformable to truth and reason, owe their beginning to the original religion; and whereinsoever they depart from either, they are to be considered as off-sets,

and heresies, from that. A new religion is of all things the greatest absurdity that ever entered into the head of man, whether we regard him as the broacher, or the disciple, of it; for, in the first place, it denies the truth of all that went before; and, in the next, it gives us to understand, that God never thought fit to teach us the truth till now. But in case any religious innovation makes its appearance in the world at a period considerably posterior to that we assign the true religion, and, grafting itself on the old religion, pretends divine authority for the alterations, repeals, additions, it proposes to be introduced, then we must examine its credentials by the second sign of true religion; to wit, miracles.

Something there must be to distinguish between that which comes from God, and that which takes its rise from the craft of man; and to prove, that he, who presumes to alter any thing in the work of God, is commissioned by God so to do; because every thing that is done by him, must remain as it was, until he shall see fit to change it. Now we may be sure God never interposes in the business of religion, without expecting a compliance on our part; which expectation must nevertheless be wholly unreasonable, if he does not give evident proofs of his interposition; because we are never to innovate in that which came from him, before we have his authority for so doing. But how can such proof be given without miracles? If the finger of God is to be demonstrated, it must be by somewhat above the power of man to perform; nay, above all power, but his own. As to prophecies long ago given, and now fulfilled, they are indeed convincing proofs of God's interposition; but then they are no less properly to be esteemed miracles, than healing the sick, or raising the dead, with a touch, or word. Whatsoever the wisdom or power of creatures superior to ourselves may be, they are, of themselves, unable to invert the course of nature; neither can they foresee events at a great distance of time, that depend on the free elections of men, whose great-grandfathers are not yet in being. None but the almighty and all-knowing God, who made, and governs, the world, can predict the one, or perform the other; at least, none can thus predict or perform, without his permission, or rather command, who will not suffer us to be deceived, if we pray to him for direction, and are not enamoured

of deception. When such proofs as these appear to vouch for a doctrine reasonable and good in itself, as it must have shewn itself to be on trial by the first rule, we may safely conclude God is concerned in the transaction, and lends his authority to the doctrines thus evidenced by wisdom and power surpassing those of the creature. No effect can so indisputably demonstrate its cause, as miracles do a divine power; because all other effects may possibly proceed from other than the usual or apprehended causes; whereas miracles, real miracles, can be ascribed to no other cause, or author, than God. Now, by miracles, I mean such performances, as are done directly against the known course of nature; for instance, restoring the dead to life, and that without any application or means.

But as this is the grand evidence of a real commission from God, impostors will not fail to perform wonders, if they can, in proof of their pretended missions. And indeed there are secrets in nature, so utterly unknown, and so surprising to the ignorant, that it requires some attention and sagacity to distinguish their effects from real miracles. However, the observation of a few rules will put them to a trial they cannot stand, and plainly shew they are not from God. First, if somewhat very amazing is performed, and we can neither account for it, nor ever saw any thing like it done before; and he who does it, pretends to do it by the power of God; we are carefully to examine the purpose he applies it to; whether it is to give credit to a good or evil doctrine; and whether the worker hath, or very probably may have, the good of others only, or his own interest and honour, in view. It will be proper to suspend our assent for some time, till we can better judge of the consequences he intends to draw from the exhibition of such performances in our sight. In the next place we are to consider, whether his life and conversation is secret or open; for if it is secret, there is some reason to suspect his morals, and consequently to look on him as one whom God would not employ. If his life is openly vicious, or, after some time, found out to be so; and if what he does appears to be performed with an ill design; we need not scruple to condemn his miracles; because we know God might easily find a more creditable instrument to work with, and may be sure would never choose to recom-

mend vice, or even virtue, to the rest of mankind, in so extraordinary a way, by one who shews he does not believe in the expediency of his own precepts, nor consequently in the divinity of his own miracles. But in case nothing of this kind is discovered, it will then be proper, in the third place, to give a more close attention to his performances themselves, to examine sharply whether they may not be done by concert and connivance; whether he uses any apparatus, or takes up any time in doing them, or exhibits only in certain places, and at appointed hours; whether they are of one or two particular kinds; whether he is as ready to do them before men of sense, as among ignorant and superstitious people; and on sudden and accidental calls, as with previous warning; whether they are in themselves acts of real utility and beneficence, or only useless tricks; and lastly, whether they are really and truly so contrary to that part of nature, which we know by continual experience, that no power, but his who controls nature, could possibly have effected them. If his miracles are wrought in great abundance, and with great variety, and so freely and openly, as to give every one that pleases an opportunity of putting their genuineness to the test, and no signs of imposture are discovered; if he is not only harmless and innocent in all parts of his behaviour, but full of meekness, beneficence, and candour, omitting no opportunity of doing good, even to such as use him worst; we must conclude, that God is with him, and that we cannot slight or oppose him, without slighting or opposing God, who would never have seconded the preachings of any man with such transcendent power, if he had not thereby intended to give him credit with all mankind for whatsoever he shall inculcate in his name. But if, besides all this, it should so happen, that, seven or eight hundred years before, the miracles he works, together with the chief transactions of his life, should have been foretold in a prophecy still extant; and if the time and place of his appearance should have been also predicted in a prophecy near as old, and still also extant: nay, if it should appear by other prophecies then in being, that he had been promised, from time to time, during the space of near four thousand years; and, what is yet more, if he utters several very extraordinary prophecies himself, some of which most unex-

pectedly take effect soon after, contrary to the endeavours of his powerful enemies to vilify him, by falsifying them; these predictions, joined with his miracles, must put our incredulity greatly to a stand, if not wholly overcome it. We should not indeed make a proper use of either of the rules laid down, should we retain any doubt concerning the divinity of his mission, or the truth of the religion he preaches. After standing so severe a trial, he hath a full right to our faith, and may challenge the utmost attention and veneration for what he says; especially, provided the matter of his doctrines shall appear to be, not only conformable to the essence of the original religion, but in itself useful, wise, and weighty; for we cannot suppose God should send one to teach us things of little significance, or such as we knew before, or such as neither required nor admitted any farther enforcements.

And this brings us to the consideration of the third sign or mark of divine original in a religion; namely, the edification of those to whom it is proposed. In order the more clearly to discern this sign, we ought candidly to consider, whether we stand in any need of instructions, or not; whether we are as wise and good as we could wish to be; and whether, in some particulars, relating to futurity, and reformation of manners, or to the terms of acceptance in the sight of God, our ignorance and uncertainty are not such as may make farther information necessary. It is requisite, on this occasion, that we should neither be too diffident of our own judgments in discerning the truth, or falsity, of a religion proposed; nor too confident of our sagacity in finding out the true religion, without assistance. However, there is greater danger of too much confidence; because the presumption against us is very high and strong, both from the natural short-sightedness of the human mind in things of this kind, and from the great abundance of the miracles, which he who takes upon him to teach us, performs. It is hard to suppose his instructions unnecessary, who awakes our attention, and demands our conviction, by works so far exceeding the power of nature.

Two things then are here carefully to be examined; first, our own understandings, that we may judge, whether, of ourselves, we know, or may know, enough of religious mat-

ters, to make farther information needless; and secondly, in case we are sensible we do not, we are next to examine the instructions proposed, that we may see whether they come home to our wants, and are qualified to dispel that darkness we modestly lament in ourselves.

As to our own understandings, we must consider whether we brought any stock of religious knowledge into the world; what we could have afterward acquired independent of all instruction; and how much the rest of mankind could have taught us, if God had never, by revelation, taught them any thing. In order to make a right judgment in this matter, we are fairly to reflect on the doubts and uncertainties that puzzle our own reason, and the religious disputes about the object of worship, the nature of worship itself, and the duration of our own being; which have perplexed the world wherever either no revelation, or a very defective tradition of revelation, hath been received. Socrates and Plato were of opinion, this darkness of the human understanding, as to matters of so great moment, called for a revelation. Others think, on the contrary, either that it is no great loss to be ignorant in things of this kind, or else, that human reason, with no other assistance than what the works of creation afford it, may easily attain to a sufficient knowledge of religion. Which of these two opinions hath the best right to plead experience for its voucher, we must determine for ourselves, before we either receive, or reject, an instructor pretending to come from God. If we find ourselves sufficiently knowing, it will be an egregious folly to lend an ear to any man on the subject of religion; whether he takes upon him to speak from God, or his own discoveries. But if we judge ourselves deficient in religious knowledge, it will be our business to hear what he, who says he comes from God, hath to say, since he gives such proof of his mission, as we cannot convict of imposture. If what he tells us is no more than what we knew before, or is wide of our purpose, he may be a fit instructor for others, but can be of no service to us; and therefore we are to have nothing farther to do with him. But in case he tells us the very things we doubted of, clears up our ignorance as to the very points we were utterly at a loss in; for instance, teaches us how to think justly of God, and our duty to him; of ourselves, and our duty to one

another; of our chief good and happiness, and how to secure it; of our chief evil and misery, and how to escape it; if in this he appears to deal fairly by us, proving such things, as admit of it, by reason; and such as do not, by the authority of his miracles; and if for all his labours he seeks no other reward, no other gratification, than the dissipation of our doubts and errors, and the reformation of our manners; we must be lost to common sense and goodness, in case we refuse, or even hesitate our assent. Yet, after all, should he, in addressing himself to us, evidently appear to catch at our applause, or inveigle our assent, by rhetorical flourishes, and parading speeches, it ought greatly to stagger our opinion of his mission. We cannot easily suppose God would condescend to be served by arts like these; or that a message, from him, supported with real miracles, could need these aids, which imposture and fallacy have so long employed, that they are now qualified only to bring suspicion on the cause that retains them. On the other hand, there is some danger of taking the simplicity, wherewith the teacher may happen to deliver himself, for insignificance. To a false taste, that which is not high-seasoned, is apt to appear insipid. That we may not therefore be deceived either by him or ourselves, we are carefully to weigh the depth, the solidity, and the pertinence of its matter; and by no means either to admire him for the garniture, or despise him for the artless plainness of his elocution.

However, there is still another sign of divine original, which it concerns us not a little to have an eye to; and that is, the power and efficacy of his doctrines over the hearts of such as shall receive them. If God sends us a religion, it must not only be right and true; but of force sufficient to attain its end; namely, the happiness of mankind. The infinitely gracious Being cannot be supposed to give us a religion for any other end. Neither can the infinitely wise Being be supposed to give us a religion for that end, which contains not means equivalent thereunto. Now since our happiness cannot be provided for, but by the reformation of our manners, these means must be of sufficient strength to work this reformation; otherwise the religion that proposes them, must be unworthy both of the goodness and wisdom of the *author it* pretends to derive from.

To know how great the strength of these means should be, we must well consider the difficulty of the work they are applied to, and the delicacy of that work in beings morally free. As to its difficulty; he knows little of himself, of the corrupt nature, and inveterate habits, he hath to correct and subdue in a mind so irresolute, so inconstant, who is not thoroughly convinced, the means of his reformation must be very efficacious to be successful. A sensible man, who hath studied himself, sees plainly, that, unless he is very powerfully assisted, he cannot be thoroughly reclaimed. His many ineffectual anxieties on this subject, his baffled resolutions, attended with little else than continual falls, and shameful disappointments, serve sufficiently to teach him this lesson of humility. He cannot help considering the lower half of his nature, as a vicious and refractory beast, that is not broken to the bridle without infinite skill and strength; nor the upper, as a raw and feeble rider, by no means equal to a task so arduous. Convinced of this, he must be satisfied, that none but he, who made him, is able to mend him; and that in the true religion only, the means of this amendment are to be hoped for.

And as to the delicacy of this work, in regard to his freedom, he cannot but be sensible, that means of prodigious efficacy may be used with him, before they amount to compulsion, or do more than counterbalance his bias to evil. He knows God will assist his virtue, not force his services; and therefore, in having recourse to religion, he looks for such assistance, at least, as may keep his corruptions at bay, and suspend him in a state of liberty.

Now this he hath reason to hope for, in a religion that calls God its author, and hath already given such proofs of its divinity. But if he reflects attentively on the matter, he will find there are but two conceivable ways whereby this may be effected; first, by the influence of the Divine Being, working on his thoughts; and secondly, by future rewards and punishments proposed to his desires and fears. God, he knows, is present everywhere; and can assist him, and all men, as he pleases. He knows also, that he alone can so proportion the assistance to the want, as to enable his creature to get the better of his irregular dispositions, without infringing on his freedom. And as to rewards and punish-

ments, he is sensible, if they are future, they cannot be made so great, as too strongly to engage his desires and fears in the work of reformation, or to bear too hard on the liberty of his will. This he gathers experimentally from their effects on those who already believe in their eternity, without being forced by their faith to a life of perfect purity; and likewise from observing, that, in all men, expectations, though of the greatest moment, if very remote, are not so apt to make deep impressions on the mind, as matters of vastly less consequence, that are present with us, or very soon to be at hand. Whether the mind learns this of the eye, which takes a little hill that is near it, to be much greater than the largest mountain at a distance, he cannot tell; but as he finds the thing is true in fact, so he hath no reason to apprehend the loss of his liberty in the greatness, be it what it will, of the happiness promised to virtue, or of the misery threatened to vice. Sensible therefore of his own wants, and not in the least afraid of too strong a reason for being good, he requires, in the true religion, very powerful succours from God, and the proposal of virtue and endless happiness, or of vice and endless misery, to his free election; not only as a necessary means of his reformation, but also as a necessary proof of its divine original. He requires, in short, that the religion he gives his faith to should discourage vice to the uttermost, and promote, with more than human power, the advancement of virtue in every soul that receives it.

Every rational mind must regard these marks of divinity as sufficient to distinguish the true religion from all others, and universally to draw the assent of mankind, if inattention, or prejudice, infused by education, passion, pleasure, pride, &c. does not stand between that religion and reason.

However, a rational man, who knows the obliquity of the human heart, the wild irregularity of the human understanding, and the endless variety of extravagant opinions, too apt to be engendered in the one, and nursed in the other, even under the influence of the best religion, cannot help wishing God had been pleased to establish some one certain, intelligible, and infallible rule of faith and practice, in order, for ever, to ascertain a system of truths so infinitely beneficial to mankind. Such a man could hardly help concluding, from the wisdom of God, the necessity of a revelation, and

the disingenuous disposition of mankind to extort a voucher from the true religion, to authorize their own conceits and designs, that if a revelation, intended for all men, was ever given, it must have been so recorded as to prevent, as far as possible, all alterations, additions, mutilations, whatsoever. There is nothing the mind of man, when left wholly to itself, is more unable to fix than the principles of religion. If it hath no information on the subject, it can hardly ever form any scheme of religion at all; and if it hath the advantage of some religious hints, it either suffers other matters, that appear for the present more interesting, to shuffle them entirely out of its attention, or makes them the seeds of speculations so wild and wicked as were never heard of in other parts of knowledge. This most abominable humour is apt to continue with it, even after it hath been introduced to the true and perfect religion. All the awe that it feels, or ought to feel, for the infinite majesty of him who dictated that religion, is not sufficient to hinder such a mind from substituting its own monstrous inventions in the place of God's oracles, and even pleading his authority directly in the face of his own express declarations. It is true, no expedient, though ever so wisely contrived, or applied, can wholly prevent the unaccountable doubts of the wrong-headed, the petulant errors of the conceited, or the incorrigible vices of the perversely wicked. No degree of light can enable the blind to see. No goodness of the road can bring a man to his journey's end, who neither can walk, nor will be carried.

But, to remedy this evil, as far as the nature of the thing will permit, a genuine record of the true religion must be kept up, that its articles may not be in danger of total corruption in such a sink of opinions, every one more cordially favoured, and more zealously abetted, by its wrong-headed inventor, or ill-hearted abettor, than the most fundamental principle God ever revealed to mankind. If the truth of a religion is to be proved by prophecy, the prophecies relating to it must be recorded, and time given for their completion, that the picture of that religion, when the substance represented comes to be fully unveiled, may be known to have been previously drawn by the hand of God, and its future author and finisher clearly distinguished by the prophetic characters and promises made of him many ages before.

And when he hath put the last hand to the divine revelation, his history and doctrines must be also faithfully recorded by competent and unquestionable witnesses, and both records kept with the utmost care and exactness. Such a record of every thing necessary to be believed or done, is the best expedient to ascertain a religion, the communication whereof is finished, and the whole finally fitted for universal use in all times and places. By this all doubts, worth the clearing up, may be resolved; all disputes, wherein truth only is sought for, determined, or condemned as frivolous; all principles, necessary to be believed, expressly asserted; all duties precisely defined; and all the motives or obligations, whereby those duties are urged on either the conscience, or the will, always standing out in that full force and energy, which the authority of Almighty God impressed on them from the beginning. Such a record a rational man hath reason to look for of a religion coming from God, and setting itself forth, as brought to full perfection.

But whereas disputes may arise concerning the sense of this record in some particulars, it may be expected by such as cannot be content with reasonable satisfaction, that there should always be an infallible interpreter to explain that record, as often as doubts concerning its meaning may arise. But the infallibility of such an interpreter can be founded on nothing else, than a continual inspiration; nor that inspiration evidenced any otherwise, than by a perpetual miracle. Now a perpetual miracle, considered as the evidence of any thing, is nonsense; because, were it at first ever so apparently contrary to the known course of nature, it must in time be taken for the natural effect of some unknown cause, as all physical phenomena, if far enough traced, always are; and consequently must fall into a level, as to a capacity of proving any thing, with the most ordinary appearances of nature, which, though all of them miracles, as to the primary cause of their production, can never be applied to the proof of an inspiration, because ordinary and common. But, even though the miracle were varied ever so often, in order to the proof of the inspiration, it could not answer the end, nor settle all the religious disputes of mankind; as is experimentally evident from the stubbornness of those, who, on a certain occasion, would not be concluded by the decisions of

men, whom they knew to have a power of working all manner of miracles. They saw the miracles every day, and yet many of them were as far from conversion as ever; while numbers that were converted, set up opinions of their own, directly opposite to the express determinations of such as wrought the miracles, and could by no means be brought to submit. Besides, are all questions, however unnecessary or impertinent, to be decided? Does it become the wisdom or majesty of God, to encourage an endless curiosity as to matters no way useful, perhaps prejudicial, to mankind? If it does not, what is the use of a perpetual infallible interpreter or dictator? Why, only to decide things already decided by the original revelation fully recorded; as if God could not speak as intelligibly by his first, as by his subsequent interpreter. Why may not this last speak as obscurely as the first, and so require a third interpreter to explain his meaning? Hence it appears, that right reason is a sufficient interpreter of God's words, and asks no other to unfold their meaning.

On the whole, it is certainly a duty every reasonable man owes to God and himself, to find out, if he possibly can, a religion that answers to the character, and stands the trial, insisted on. All his other pursuits and inquiries are about trifles of no moment, in comparison with this. They relate to a state of things, wherewith happiness is incompatible; this to one, wherein it is or may be certain. They relate to a day, a month, or a year; this to duration without end. They relate to a body, corrupt and despicable in its gratifications, and perishable without remedy; this to a soul, fitted for pure enjoyments, and high pretensions, and in itself immortal.

What now must be said of him, who is deeply skilled in politics, who hath an extensive knowledge of trade, who can advise with a judgment not to be questioned, and speak with an elegance not to be resisted, in lawsuits and other secular affairs; and yet hath either no religion, or at least no reason for his religion? It is true, 'he is wiser in his generation than the children of light' are in theirs. He knows better perhaps how to serve 'the god of this world,' than the very saints know how to serve the God of heaven. Yet, after all, he is but a sensible, a knowing fool. This very man would not

scruple to call another a fool, who should shew vast industry, and equal ingenuity, in finding out and bringing to perfection some new bauble for children; but, in the name of common sense, with what face? with what assurance? Is it because he hath chosen a bauble of somewhat greater significance to compliment with his understanding and time? What minute distinctions, what almost imperceptible preferences, are sufficient for vanity to boast of! All his pomp, his parade, his wealth, are but the rattles of a little older child, in the eye of true wisdom. If death cannot demonstrate this, futurity at least will do it, to the infinite mortification of that pride, which values itself on worldly wisdom. Then he only will be found to have been wise, and to have been blessed with true greatness of soul, who made it his chief study to find out the right religion, and who, having found it, made it his chief endeavour 'to hold it fast;' that is, to retain it in an understanding thoroughly convinced, and in a heart deeply affected; to impress it strongly on all his thoughts; to make it the rule of all his actions, and his guide to God.

If man was made like a swine, only to eat, drink, and die; or like a peacock, to flutter, to make a vain show for awhile, and then perish for ever; he would be in the right on it to indulge himself in his draught and feathers, and look no farther: but then what need of coaches and palaces? what need of thrones and sceptres? why is he always looking upwards, and aiming at something greater than he hath yet attained to? Why are the solid satisfactions of the beast laid aside for the airy but anxious pursuits, for the imaginary but dangerous schemes, of the man? Why does he not prudently live down to his own principle, and seek for ease and safety in his sensuality?

No, he was made for greater things. Not greater, surely, if not better. But what can be either greater or better, if to-morrow he dies? dies, soul as well as body? O death! how satirically dost thou grin at the folly of avarice and ambition! Wert thou an Atheist, thou wouldst do the same; because the scheme of life they prescribe, is not much more consistent with infidelity than religion. It is true, indeed, man was made for much greater things than this world can promise, or a short life accomplish. He was made for God,

for heaven, and eternity; and the greatness of his soul is suited to the dignity of the objects. But he no sooner loses sight of these, and meanly turns his unbounded appetite of grandeur to low and little objects, than he presents us with the ridiculous view of a sage quarrelling for cockle-shells, or an emperor catching flies; proud, if his worthy endeavours succeed; and miserably chagrined, if they fail. There is but one thing in nature commensurate to the wishes of an immortal soul; and the true religion alone shews us how to arrive at that. Nothing else can restore us to the dignity of our nature, can denominate us truly wise, can make us truly great and happy. Why do we esteem ourselves superior to the brute creation, if it is not because we are endued with reason? But what comes of this distinction, if reason serves no better purpose than teaching us to be a little more ingeniously brutal? If in this consists the excellence of our nature, why is it deceased to mere animal uses? Why does it not teach us to aspire, through rational piety and love, to the source of all being, all beauty, all excellence, all good? What is man without reason? He is a world inhabited by nothing but serpents, wolves, and lions. And what is reason without religion? It is a lamp not yet lighted; or an eye in the dark; or a country naturally fertile and beautiful, but so blasted, that all above the soil is withered; and all the roots and seeds of useful plants beneath are as totally destroyed, as if some malignant spirit had been preparing it for the habitation of himself, and his hideous associates. The whole creation would be nothing, or worse than nothing, without God. But the rational soul must be the most lost and miserable of all creatures, if cut off from God; for God is the light, the life, the very soul, of the soul. Now nothing but religion can unite the soul to God. And what is religion, but the knowledge, the fear, the love of God, curing the corruptions, and exalting the virtues of the soul to a resemblance of infinite excellence?

But God is not seen as he really is; and consequently cannot be regarded, imitated, or served, as he ought to be, through the medium of a wrong religion, which misrepresents him to the mind, as a wavy uneven glass does all objects to the eye. If he is represented to us as nothing but mercy, he cannot be feared; if as nothing but justice, he

cannot be loved; if he is not both loved and feared, he cannot be worthily served, unless his proper service is supposed to consist in presumption, or despair. If he is set forth as vicious, revengeful, cruel, he cannot be imitated, but to the farther depravation of the soul. If he is exhibited as neither knowing, nor caring for, what his creatures do, as neither a rewarder of virtue, nor a punisher of vice, then religion differs not in effect from Atheism; all law must be imposition; all government, tyranny; and the whole world a hell of wickedness and confusion.

Hence it appears, that a false religion is better than no religion, only in proportion as it approaches nearer to the true. And what follows? but that it is the first duty, and the highest interest of a man, to search, with all possible candour, with all possible diligence, for the true religion; and when he hath discovered it, which, I think, such an inquirer cannot fail to do, is it not then as much his duty and interest to give it the absolute government of himself? If he can make himself easy before he hath accomplished this work, let his stupidity in other things be ever so great, I must assure him, his ease of mind on this head is infinitely the highest proof of his folly. What name then shall we give it in him, who, as to all other knowable matters, surprises us with the evident signs of sensibility, judgment, and prudence? Here language fails me, and therefore I shall make an end with

Most humbly beseeching the Father of Lights, and Fountain of Wisdom, to guide us by his Holy Spirit into all truth, that, 'having proved all things, we may hold fast that which is good,' to the eternal salvation of our souls, and the glory of his name; to whom be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE II.

THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD.

2 TIM. III. 14—17.

Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them:
And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

THE word 'Scripture,' of which so high a character is given in this passage, signifies, by its derivation, only a writing; but here is put for certain writings, whereof God is supposed to be the author or inspirer. When the apostle tells Timothy, 'he had known these Scriptures, or writings, from a child,' he speaks of the books contained in the Old Testament only, which, as they prophesied of the Messiah, and pointed out him, and his religion, to the reader, were able, therefore, 'to make that reader wise unto salvation, through faith in Jesus' the Messiah; but, when he says 'all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,' he extends the signification of the word to the writings of the New Testament also, which he took to be the dictates of Divine inspiration, as well as those of the Old.

The books he comprehends under the name of Scriptures, thus eminently understood, speak in the same high strain concerning the inspiration of God, and of its necessity, in order to true and saving wisdom. They acknowledge there is a rational faculty in man, whereby he may attain to knowledge in sensible and temporal things; and whereby also he may judge of higher matters, when God is pleased to instruct him therein; but, as to these latter, they represent God as the only sufficient teacher, and every where send us to him for instruction. 'There is a spirit in man,' says Elihu, 'and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them

understanding;' Job xxxii. 8. God himself intimates the same by the questions he puts to Job, chap. xxxviii. 36. 'Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?' David prays incessantly to God for wisdom: 'Give me understanding, and I shall live,' Psalm cxix. 144. 'Let my cry come near before thee, O Lord; give me understanding, according to thy word;' ver. 169. Solomon exhorts his readers, on all occasions, to seek for wisdom of God, to whose gift alone he ascribes it, both in himself and others: 'The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding;' Prov. ii. 6. Christ 'thanks his Father,' Luke x. 21, 'for revealing those articles of wisdom unto babes, which he had hid from the wise and prudent;' and promises, chap. xxi. 15, 'to give his disciples a mouth, and wisdom, which all their adversaries should not be able to gainsay, or resist.' 'If any of you lack wisdom,' says St. James, chap. i. 5, 'let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given you.' St. Peter ascribes all prophecy to inspiration: 'The prophecy,' says he, 'came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;' 2 Pet. i. 21. A great deal more might be added, to shew, that the penmen of the Bible endeavour to represent God as the fountain of wisdom, or true religion; and themselves as only the scribes, who record in writing what God is pleased to dictate.

But whereas every religion lays claim to a divine original, as well as that contained in the books just now mentioned; and whereas Mahometism produces a written record of itself, which it ascribes to God, and his angels, as inspiring or dictating whatsoever Mahomet committed to writing; it is the business of a rational inquirer to examine them all by the rules and signs recommended in the former Discourse, that he may make a competent judgment of their merits, before he finally fixes his choice. To avoid impertinence and prolixity on this occasion, we will suppose this inquiry over in regard to all religions but that of the Bible; and terminated in a rejection of some, for wanting a fixed system of principles properly recorded; and, of others, not for wanting a record indeed, but for having one stuffed with such absurdities and contradictions as reason cannot possi-

bly receive for divine inspiration. Having, by this supposition, left ourselves but one religion to inquire into, we may perhaps in the compass of this Discourse arrive at satisfaction as to that. If any one who hears me is surprised at my saying there is but one religion contained in the Bible, whereas Judaism, or Christianity, hath, or, at least, in different ages of the world, must have had, an equal right to found itself on some part or other of that book; he ought to know, that Christianity, rightly understood, disowns the distinction; and represents itself as the religion given to the first man, and never altered, from the beginning to the publication of the last-written book in the New Testament, as to its great fundamentals, belief in one God, and the Messiah; but only in mere modes of worship, and obedience, wherewith God thought proper to diversify, to enlarge, to explain, or to enforce it, at different periods of time. If both Testaments are the work of God, they do, they can, contain but one religion, because there neither is, nor possibly can be, but one true religion; nor is it to be supposed God could ever give any other. Now he who believes God to be the author of the Old Testament, must believe him also the author of the New; because, if he is not, the prophecies of the Old, relating to the Messiah, which make a great part of it, must be false.

The Jews, who, from Christ's time to this, have mistaken Christianity for a religion essentially different from their own, have, in reality, apostatized from the religion of the Old Testament; and have given the lie to all their prophets, in saying Jesus was not the Messiah; while, at the same time, they confirmed, as far as in them lay, the truth of their predictions, by what they did to him, and have since done, in respect to his religion. It is true, they and the Christians have now two distinct religions; because the former, resting in the exterior and temporary part of the Scriptural religion, which, by its own confession, was only preparatory to a more spiritual and lasting dispensation, rejected that faith they themselves waited for, as the grand accomplishment of all revelation. While they served God in the 'type or shadow,' and hoped for 'better things yet to come,' at a certain period predicted, they acted consistently with the scheme of religion laid down in their own Scriptures.

But when that period arrived, and those better things were offered, they, mistaking the nature of the promises, refused the things promised; and so, contrary to their own prophecies, adhered still to the type, when they ought to have embraced that which was typified. If God was the author of the Old Testament, they were in the right religion till the time prefixed for the arrival of the Messiah; but departed from it, and took up with another, when they rejected him, and passed the period at which he was to be expected. Since that, their religion consists in a preposterous expectation of an event either actually passed, or never to come: whereas they who embraced Christianity, received the substance of that religion which was prefigured under the law; and, be it right or wrong, are not typically, but really and truly, in the old religion, from which the unbelieving Jews apostatized. This is the very state of the case delivered by St. Paul, in the third of his epistle to the Galatians; where, having shewn, that 'the promise of the Messiah was given to Abraham,' ver. 8, and that 'the law was afterward added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made,' ver. 19, he then opens the use of the law, and says, 'it was the schoolmaster of the Jews, to bring them unto Christ, that they might be justified by faith,' ver. 24. He accordingly, Rom. x. 4, calls Christ, or the Messiah, 'the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' Whatever we think of St. Paul's inspiration, as real, or only pretended, we cannot help considering this way of interpreting the promises of the Old Testament, and the Law, and terminating their accomplishment in the Messiah, as just and right; and therefore must regard the religion of St. Paul as that very religion which was prophetically preached in the Old Testament.

Laying it, therefore, down as a point already proved, that there is but one religion set forth in both the Testaments, though under different dispensations or covenants, let us, in order to try whether this is the true religion, examine the writings, wherein it is contained, by the rules prescribed in the former Discourse, that we may judge, if we can, of the divine original and authority pretended to by these writings, which will decide the question about the truth or falsity of the religion they set before us.

In the first place, we have here a written record of the religion under question; which gives us a fair opportunity of examining its merits; an advantage not to be expected in any religion depending merely either on the vague opinions and reasonings of man, or on oral tradition, so liable to be changed and corrupted. And as to the genuineness of this record, it is infinitely less to be suspected, than that of any other history or account of former times; because the people in whose hands it was, always regarded it with the utmost veneration, as the book of God himself; proved their principles, and decided their disputes, by it; and therefore were extremely watchful over the original text, lest any one should mutilate or corrupt it, in order by that means to suppress its evidence against him, or pervert it for him. It is farther to be observed, that all the other books in the world have not produced so many copies, translations, comments, nor so great a variety of consequent writings, all drawing their matter, their arguments, and illustrations, from thence. In every age since the use of letters and learning flourished in the world, this book hath been the fountain not of a few obscure tracts, but of whole libraries; and hath found employment for more inquirers, readers, writers, disputants, than all other histories, than all other arts and sciences, put together. As all this made the loss of the book itself a thing impossible, so it made the corruption of it a thing next to impossible. He who doubts the genuineness of this book, and yet believes in that of Herodotus, Thucydides, or Livy, ought, for the same reason, to look on them as less genuine than Valerius Maximus, Aulus Persius, or Censorinus; for, by his rule, the more a book is read, considered, and quoted, the more likely it is to be corrupted; or, in other words, the greater its authority was in all former ages, the less it ought to be esteemed in this.

There can indeed be no rational dispute about the antiquity and genuineness of the Old Testament, while we have the Jews to vouch for it, whose origin, whose laws, whose pretensions and expectations, it contains. If these men could be supposed to have corrupted any part of it, the prophecies relating to the Messiah were the most likely to have suffered under their hands; which, nevertheless, still stare them in the face from almost every page of their own Scrip-

tures. There is nothing to be found in the history of mankind so extraordinary as what relates to this people.

They are by far the oldest race of men on the globe, subsisting distinctly from all other nations on one economy of laws and customs, although scattered through all countries, and nowhere possessed of one, where they might unite, and govern themselves according to those laws. They have many ages ago buried all the ancient empires with which they had any thing to do, although themselves of little strength at the best, and for the most part oppressed and persecuted, as men, between whom and the rest of the world there is no common tie of humanity. They are venerated for their antiquity, and from an opinion, that they were once the favourite people of God; and yet despised as the very scum and offscourings of the human species. They are, in short, the miracle of history; but in nothing so wonderful as in their scrupulous and zealous attachment to a book that mentions and condemns their whole economy, as out of date, and superseded by another; and records the curses of Almighty God denounced against them in a hundred places of that book, and executed on them in all places of the world, and through every age since their apostacy. Now this can be traced to no other cause but Divine Providence; nor can any other imaginable reason be assigned why Providence should thus deal by them, unless it is, that they may the more effectually vouch for the genuineness of those writings, wherein his prescience, and their blindness, are recorded.

As to the antiquity and purity of the New Testament, it cannot be called in question, till every other book, no way related to Christianity, and older than our own times, is, with reason, condemned as spurious, in regard to its pretended original, and as too corrupt to be depended on in any of its parts; nor, indeed, even then, because the arguments affecting their credit cannot strike at a book, the truth of which had been attested by the blood of so many martyrs, and its authority alleged by so many myriads of men, in every age since it was published, for tenets, which they held on all sides as dear as their lives, against others which they detested and avoided more than death.

If any one objects here, that as much may be said for the antiquity and purity of the Alcoran, we deny it. What

martyrs sacrificed their lives for the truth of the religion it exhibits, either in the lifetime of its author, or soon after; unless we call those martyrs, who fell in battles fought for the plunder of nations, to which this religion pretended to give its professors a right? What controversies, what councils, drew their arguments from, or decided their differences by, this book, in the first ages after its publication? The Mahometans had not, for a long time after the decease of their pretended prophet, any religious disputes, if we do not call those such which were set on foot about the right of succession; and with these the Alcoran had nothing to do. During this time Abubeker, who formed the incoherent papers of Mahomet into a book, and others who had the keeping of that book, might have done with it what they pleased. But, from the time this book began to be often copied, it could not possibly have admitted of much alteration, although it might have been corrupted with vastly more ease than the New Testament, so much oftener transcribed from the beginning, and translated into such a variety of languages. It is indeed next to downright madness, to imagine this record of Christianity could have had any other date than that of the church which kept it; or that a book so copied, so quoted, so translated, so expounded, so universally and continually appealed to, could have been materially adulterated.

But, supposing both the Testaments to be as ancient and as uncorrupted as we please, yet still we are to inquire whether they are the work of God, or not. There are two ways by which the author of a book may be known; first, by his style and matter; and, secondly, by his owning it himself.

As to the style of the Scriptures, it is, in one respect, as various as the ages in which it was dictated, or the peculiar genius of each prophet or apostle who committed it to writing can well be supposed to have made it, had no common inspirer or dictator directed their pens. Their different choice of words, and use of phrases, are apparent, not only in the originals, but even in the translations. Yet, in another respect, there are several peculiarities that seem to distinguish it from the writings of men, though under the disadvantage of a translation, made by mere men;

which does not hinder it from demonstrating infinitely more beauty in one part; more force and pathos in another; more true sublimity, and yet simplicity, in all; than the most exquisite productions of human genius in their original dress. It is delivered in a species of writing quite distinct from that of the classics, and more natural. Those justly admired performances shew the highest improvement to which the mind of man can, by its own efforts, ascend. They are perfectly exact and delicate. They are so highly polished and finished, that hardly a single thought or word can be replaced by another, without a sensible loss. But then, with all this, they are really stiff, laboured, low and languid, in comparison of the Scriptures. The art with which they are penned discovers itself, in spite of all their care to conceal it, not only in the texture of the work at large, and the nice adjustment of its matter, but in the choice of every phrase, and the very cadence of every period. It is quite otherwise in the Bible. We have there no appearance of art; no manner of care about minutenesses, about polished words, and prim phrases, and little prettinesses. It does not appear, from any one passage of the whole, that the writer had the least intention to strike the minds of his readers with any thing else than the force of his thoughts, conveyed in a rough and masculine dress. Hence arises this admirable effect, that no part of our attention is impertinently amused with the words, but all given to the sentiment, which goes naked to the heart with an energy not to be resisted. When men speak, they require art and address to give strength and persuasion to what they say. But it is not so with God. He can speak to the mind by spirit and thought alone; and never uses words, but for a memorial of what he says. When he condescends to deliver himself in this human vehicle, he will not vouchsafe to borrow any thing from it, but mere conveyance; nay, he disdains the low assistance of method, because it borders on art. He scatters flowers and fruit with such an unaffected profusion, as sets the art of the gardener in a very contemptible light, on the comparison. Hence it is, that as a garden can please us but for a very little time, whereas the face of nature is ever new and delightful; so the finical performances of writers uninspired, howsoever pleasing they may be at first, soon grow dull

and languid on the taste; while such as God vouchsafes to dictate, not only bear, but improve on, a thousand readings. New sense, new beauty, new force, spring up at every repetition, as if all the sentiments had vegetated since the last. But this is owing to the prodigious depth of what he says, which does not, like the thoughts of men, ostentatiously display all its strength and beauty on the surface, but reserves enough to invite and reward every return of our attention. What other stories affect us like that of Joseph and his brethren? What fables, produced by human wit, strike the mind like the parables of Christ, or like that of Nathan to David? How poor and unaffecting are all the descriptions of God's works in other performances, to those we find in the book of Job? How long and spiritless are all the attempts of other writers to raise our idea of the Divine Majesty, in comparison of those we find in the Psalms, in the prophecies of Isaiah, and in the Apocalypse? How shall we account for it, that all other writers, who made it their sole business to aim at force, at dignity and sublimity, should fall so infinitely short of the Scriptural writers, who certainly aimed at no such thing? If we are men of taste and integrity, we must acknowledge, that, in case God should ever deign to speak to men, we should expect to hear him speak in the language of the Scriptures, artless and simple, like them, in his expressions; sublime and powerful, like them, in his sentiments.

But, again; an author is known by the matter of his performance. We ascribe this performance to the author of 'The Whole Duty of Man,' on account of its piety and good sense; that to Mr. Addison, because its thoughts are more delicate, and its turn more genteel, than those of other writers; and a third to Sir Isaac Newton, for no other reason, than because it shews a reach of thought beyond the extent of all other minds. But, when we come to look into the Scriptures, we discover a scene of instruction, which, if true, is of infinitely higher dignity and use than the matter of all other writings laid together. We there see, in the historical part of it, when and how this world was created; how we were brought into being; how we fell into this state of sin and misery, in which we find ourselves; how God drowned the ancient world for the sins of men, and

preserved a family to repeople it; how he chose out a people from the rest of mankind, and governed them by laws peculiar to themselves, and by a power superior to nature; how he sent his Son into the world to redeem us from sin and misery by his precepts, and his blood. This history, which runs through a space of more than four thousand years, carries on it, as to the characters and actions of men, the evident signs of more truth and impartiality, than are to be met with in any other history. The failings and vices of such as are most highly favoured in it, nay, and even of those who wrote it, are so undisguisedly recorded, that one can hardly help believing some higher hand than their own had the government of their pens, when they were employed in the work. With this chain of history is interwoven a system of religion, uniform throughout as to its object and end; but various as to its outward form, according to the different circumstances under which it was from time to time imparted. The worship of one God; the commemoration of his mercies with gratitude, and of his judgments with fear; the reformation of men's manners; the immortality of their souls; their redemption from the guilt and punishment of sin by the death of Christ; their exemption from everlasting misery, and title to eternal glory; form, as it were, the outlines of this religion. But, in order to give it the greater power over our affections, certain positive institutions are added to it, as the most efficacious engines to work on minds exceedingly addicted by nature to outward and sensible things. And, in order to teach us how infinite justice and infinite mercy, in regard to us, could be reconciled; as well as to shew us by what assistance creatures so enslaved to sin both by nature and habit might be reformed; a personal distinction in the unity of the Divine Nature is discovered, whereby we are given to understand, that there is, in God, a Father, who created and governs us; a Son, who, clothed in human nature, died to redeem us; and a Holy Spirit, who reclaims and sanctifies us. This is the religion revealed in the Old and New Testaments, which, if compared with other religions, is, to common sense and reason, as the sun is to the eye in comparison of the stars. What other religion gives us so just an idea of God, of his unity, or of his attributes? What

other religion shews him so awfully majestic in wisdom, justice, and power; or so infinitely amiable in mercy and goodness, so infinitely condescending, as to participate our nature, to suffer for our sins, and to dwell with us poor unworthy creatures? What other religion teaches us to believe, God is always present with us, knows all things, and forgets nothing? What other religion commands us to cleanse our hearts, and purify our very thoughts, and revenge the injuries of our enemies with benefits and blessings? What other religion proposes motives of sufficient weight to counterbalance the corruptions of nature, the inveteracy of sinful habits, and all those violent or ensnaring temptations wherewith the objects of sense and appetite continually assault us? Does Paganism or Manicheism furnish us with so noble an object of adoration? Does Mahometism teach us so much peace and charity towards men? Does Deism give us so many, or so inducing, reasons for love towards God, or such efficacious helps for the reformation of our manners? No; if God ever gave a religion to mankind, it must be that of the Bible. None other is suitable to the reason, or adequate to the wants, of mankind. Whatever is the force of those reasons which are drawn from the goodness of God, and the exigencies of men, to prove that the means of true religion must have been afforded to the world, it lends all its weight to the Scriptures; for, if they are not the word of God, nor the means of religious information which they suggest, the right means, then are we yet to seek for divine instruction.

Beside affording us this admirable scheme of religion, the Scriptures discover a degree of wisdom infinitely superior to all that can be collected from other writings; and this they so accommodate to all circumstances and cases, that a man, who is but moderately acquainted with them, can hardly ever be at a loss, in any difficulty, for such a rule to act by, as will never expose him to the necessity of repentance. The book of Job, the Proverbs of Solomon, but more especially the preachings of Jesus Christ, teach us such lessons of wisdom and virtue, as are sufficient to put all the philosophy of the world to the blush, and convict it of ignorance and puerility.

Again, there is no state of mind, either culpable or un-

comfortable, wherein, if a man applies to the Scriptures, he may not find a remedy against the cause of his complaint, sufficient to bridle a licentious, or console a desponding turn of mind. Is he afflicted? Job will teach him patience and submission. Hath he sinned? David will shew him how to repent, and bewail his fall. Are the enemies of his soul likely to prevail against him? Christ will rouse him to vigilance, and St. Paul will lend him armour of proof. Is he dull and languid in his addresses to God? Let him join in prayer with David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Daniel, and they will bear up his heart with them in strains of devotion so sedately ardent, so humble, and yet so elevated, that, instead of any longer looking on this act of communion with God as a dry disagreeable duty, and preferring every little miserable amusement to it, he will hardly think he lives, but when he prays.

Add to all this, that whereas the mind of man is more apt to be led by precedents than precepts, and is usually too little affected with a naked rule of action, the Scriptures are admirably fitted to his weakness in this respect; for the morality they inculcate is so blended with the history they exhibit, that the reader feels the example, while he sees the rule; and finds his heart animated, as fast as his understanding is enlightened. There is nothing more unaffecting than virtue in the abstract, as it lies formally delineated in a system of ethics. Nor, on the other hand, is there any thing more highly interesting or entertaining than the exemplification of it in the life of a truly religious and good man, with unwearied patience struggling through a thousand difficulties, with fortitude facing the most alarming dangers, with firmness resisting, and at length subduing, the most violent temptations; and, in the end, emerging in a happy and glorious catastrophe. Here is virtue, not in words, but deeds; not tricked out in lifeless definitions, and quaint propositions, but displayed in all its lustre and beauty by facts that invite the imitation of all men in whom the dignity of human nature is not entirely extinct. Now the Scriptures present us with a rich treasure of such examples. Its morality is as glorious in the pactice, as it is perfect in the precept, of those through whom it is delivered. While, by the one, it points out the way to happiness; it

animates us, by the other, with the sight of heroes, bravely fighting, greatly conquering, or joyfully gathering triumphal crowns on every step of it.

On the whole, I think no other author can be so clearly distinguished and known, in the matter of his performance, as God is, in the spirit and wisdom of this surprising book. What one man writes, another might have written, or, at least, have imitated beyond the skill of criticism to distinguish; but no man hath ever yet been the author of such a book as this; and he who knows any thing of it, and of human nature, must conclude no man ever will. It is well if the greatest genius that ever lived had penetration enough to find the bottom of its sense, or sufficient elevation of soul to rise, even on the wings it lends him, to the height it soars to. If any man says I speak from prejudice, let him enjoy his opinion, and leave me to indulge myself in mine. But one thing I am firmly pursuaded of, that, were I now for the first time to read this book, I should admire it ten times more than I do; for I will confess, my weakness in respect to novelty is as great as that of other men. I call it a weakness, for such indeed it is in all cases, but more especially in respect to this book, which hath enough in it to prevent its ever growing old or stale, to a reader of true judgment and taste, were he free from the infirmity mentioned. If, however, what I am saying is the effect of prejudice, how comes it to pass, that certain parts of this sacred book appear to infinitely greater advantage in a bald translation, than in the laboured paraphrases of Pope or Young? Why do the texts, quoted under this depreciating circumstance by Addison, shew, in the midst of his beautiful periods, and admirable sentences, like jewels set in wood? That they do, is a remark made by every common reader; but not to be accounted for on any other principles than this, that a man writ the one, and God the other.

The objections laid by Deists against the mysteries, and positive institutions, set forth in this book, are really not worth the notice of an ingenuous inquirer. If God reveals himself, he must reveal a mystery; for he is a being infinitely mysterious and incomprehensible.—Nay, every thing in nature, as well as revelation, is mysterious, if an impertinent curiosity will attempt to trace it beyond the limits of

its own capacity. And why may not God order that to be done for a great and good end, which was before indifferent? Can he not make those things subservient to a good purpose, which in their own nature are neither good nor evil? And, if he can, who shall hinder him?

Nor is it much more material to such an inquirer to give himself the trouble of discussing their arguments concerning the command of God to Abraham, for the sacrificing of his son; and to the Israelites, for spoiling the Egyptians, or dispossessing the Canaanites. It was Abraham's duty to preserve the life of his son, only because God willed it; and, for the same reason, if God was pleased to will the contrary, the patriarch must will it too, or fail in his duty. This I do not say, as looking on these things to be indifferent in themselves; but because that which makes them matter of duty, and brings them under the regulation of a law, is the will of God, howsoever known. Abraham was ready to cherish and preserve his son, while he took it to be the will of God that he should do so; and he was as willing to deprive him of life, when God commanded it; whose right of thus commanding, neither this, nor any other father, can have the least room to call in question. That act of the two which was most irksome to him, was the highest proof of his virtue and obedience; and is accordingly, with great justice, 'counted to him for righteousness' in the Scriptures. As to the spoiling the Egyptians, and outing the Canaanites, no rational objection can lie against it, as done by the command of God, till it is first proved, that God is not the absolute governor and sole proprietor of all the goods and lands in the world; and that he hath not a right to take them from such as, by oppression and wickedness, have forfeited their tenure, and to give them to others more obedient and deserving. The only difficulty in these cases lies in this, that God should command that which in itself is immoral, as for a father to kill his son, or for one neighbour to borrow of another, with an intention not to restore. But this difficulty vanishes when we consider, that God, as an absolute legislator, hath a right to dispense with the laws he lays on his subjects; that, properly speaking, no action is good, but because God wills it; nor evil, but because he forbids it; and that he who obeys the law of God for any other reason,

but because it is his law, pays more respect to the law itself, or to his own opinion, than to God; whereas all obedience ought to terminate in the one supreme Lawgiver, and absolute Governor, by no means in his law; for, whenever it does, it destroys the very essence of the law, which lies in the authority wherewith it is imposed, and not in the matter of the law itself. Both Abraham and the Israelites knew God had a right to give contrary laws at different times, and to be at all times equally obeyed. Abraham, therefore, on the command of God, was ready to kill his son; and the Israelites, on the like authority, borrowed a small part of their own, and kept it. Can any man say either did wrong, without saying, that God cannot dispense with the laws he gives us; or that, if he does, we ought to disobey, and adhere to the first law, out of respect to our own nature, against the second, founded on an express command of him who is superior to nature? Do we obey the law of God for its own sake, or for his? No doubt, for his alone; for what is the law but his will? But can he will contraries? Why not at different times, and under different circumstances? We should not turn our own nature, or the law of God, manifested by that nature, into an idol, and set it up above God; which we always do, when we make it eternal and indispensable.

If any man reads the Scriptures with candour and attention, he will find they speak throughout such things, and in such a manner, as are worthy of him whom they claim for their author. It will be evident to him, that, as to the points of antiquity, edification, and power, expected as marks of the true religion, the Scriptural religion is thoroughly qualified to stand the test of reason; inasmuch as it was given to Adam; inasmuch as it teaches us how to serve God, and save our souls; inasmuch as it communicates divine assistance, and sets before us such motives of reformation as are of infinite weight. He, indeed, who only dips here and there, who runs superficially over the words, without staying to examine their meaning, or who reads the Scriptures purely to find objections, will perceive little difference between them, and the works of men; and that perhaps to the disadvantage of the former, which nowhere, that I know of, have spruced out a single sentence for such a reader.

But, whereas arguments drawn from the style and matter

will be as willing as he is able, if a sufficient reason requires it; but no imaginable reason can be stronger, than that of proving the truth of a necessary religion to those who are to receive it.

Since, therefore, a revelation can be no otherwise proved to come from God than by miracles; if a revelation is expected, miracles also, for the same reason, must be expected. Now the miracles related in the Bible being qualified, as it is evident they really were, to stand the scrutiny for that purpose recommended in the former Discourse, right reason must receive them as evidence, that the religion of the Bible was dictated by God himself. They are to be considered as the authority and seal of Almighty God, affixed to his own revelations, by all, to whom sufficient proof is given, that those revelations were thus miraculously evidenced. As to us, and others who have lived, or shall live, in ages very remote from those in which the miracles were wrought, they are fully attested to us, in the written record made of them, by such as performed or saw them, and laid down their lives for the truth of that record. And as to the antiquity and purity of the record itself, I have already shewn there is infinitely less reason to suspect it, in regard to either, than any other record in the world. We believe in Christianity, because we are convinced it was proved by miracles; and we believe the miracles were actually wrought, because we are sure the history which relates them is authentic and genuine, having been so kept as to put it beyond a possibility of material corruptions.

But there is a particular kind of miracle recorded in the Scriptures, which proves to us, and must for ever prove beyond all controversy, that they are the word of God; and that is prophecy, or the prediction of future events, depending on the free elections of men. We have already observed, that God only foresees, and can enable his creatures to foretell, such events. But, in the Scriptures, there are predictions of this sort in such abundance, and so evidently verified, partly by facts recorded in the sacred history itself, and partly by others, attested in the history of later times, as puts the matter beyond all question, that those Scriptures are the work of God.

To avoid the circle of proving the Scriptures by the pro-

phecies, and the prophecies by the Scriptures, nothing more is requisite than to prove the Scriptures of both Testaments as old as they represent themselves to be, by arguments independent not only of the prophecies, but of the Scriptures. Now the Jews are competent vouchers for the antiquity of the Old, and the Christians for that of the New, as I have already made appear; and these are parties too opposite to be suspected of an intention to vouch for each other. Besides, were there occasion for it, the antiquity of these writings might be established as clearly as that of any other writings, on the credit of ancient authors, whose works are not comprehended in the Scriptures, and who could have had no intention to attest any such thing, either because they had no reason to think it needed their attestation, or because they would rather, if they could, have recorded the very contrary. But the point by no means stands in need of borrowed proofs. It is not to be supposed the Jews should forge a set of writings that give their adversaries so great advantages. Nor can credulity itself be so very blind, as to believe the Christians could have been all along quoting the writings of the New Testament against one another, in their continual controversies, had not these writings been extant before the first quotations of that sort.

If then there had been at first any doubt concerning the divinity of the prophecies in the Old Testament, which foretell the coming of the Messiah, together with the rise, progress, and period, of the Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires, there could be none, after all these prophecies had been exactly fulfilled. It was impossible for Isaiah or Daniel, as mere men, to foretell events so very remote, and so absolutely depending on the freedom of persons who were not to be born for some hundreds of years after the death of those prophets. Nay, it was equally impossible for any angel, or superior creature, to communicate intimations of this kind from the strength of his own faculties. That the prophets should be enabled to foretell the coming of the Messiah, carries reason with it at first sight; but that they should have the history of the three empires mentioned revealed to them, and, through them, to the Jews, seems not so pertinent or accountable. It is, however, equally an argument of the Divine foreknowledge wherewith they were

inspired. Nor is it a less proof of God's wisdom, considering how greatly his people were in after-times to interfere with these empires; and what an immense advantage it was to the Messiah, and his dispensation, to have the most important affairs of the world, for so long a course of years, foretold by the same prophets that foretold the time of his own coming, the place of his birth, his miracles, his character, his death, his resurrection, his success as a teacher, and, in short, all the chief transactions of his life. As, in the eye of the world, the character he intended to assume was low and despicable, something was necessary to aggrandize the expectation of him, and give the world reason to look on him with veneration, although unaccompanied with outward pomp and power. Nothing could so effectually answer this end (I mean nothing previous to his own miracles), as the prophetically intermixing his birth and history with those of the greatest empires the world was ever to see; and, what was more, the prognosticating to his kingdom an absolute conquest over the last and greatest of these, together with a dominion without bounds or end, as we see in the second and seventh of Daniel.

As to the prophecies relating to Christ, it is sufficient to convince us of their divinity, that Christ and his apostles quoted them to the Jews as extant in their ancient books, and as literally and exactly fulfilled in the new dispensation of religion. And as to the new prophecies which he and his disciples uttered concerning the apostacy and blindness of the Jews; the destruction of Jerusalem; the long and dreadful persecutions wherewith Christianity was to be opposed; the amazing success and triumph wherewith it was, nevertheless, to be crowned; the rise, progress, and power, of antichrist; with many other important events, all arising from the uncompelled schemes, and voluntary actions, of men in after-ages; we must grant they have had a full and clear completion, if we are not determined to give the lie to all history during a period of more than 1700 years, and even to our own experience and observation.

Now we ought to observe, in respect to almost all the prophecies in both Testaments, that, while they promised benefits and blessings to some, they threatened others with disgrace, destruction, and curses; that, therefore, if there

were some who had reason to wish for their completion, there were others no less interested to oppose, and, if possible, prevent it; and that, in most instances, the opposers had all the advantages worldly power and policy could give them; while they, who wished well to the completion, were wholly destitute of both. This was seen remarkably in the case of Christ's resurrection. He was dead; his disciples were the simplest, the weakest, the most fearful, of mankind. They wished, indeed, to see him alive again; but the stealing away of his dead body was a thing they neither could have desired, for to what end? nor have effected, because they had a military force to oppose, and, either by day or night, must have carried it away through crowds of Jews, attentive to the tomb, and watchful over an event the most awakening that had ever been foretold or promised to mankind. But that, notwithstanding all this, the prophecies were fulfilled by his actually coming to life again, these men, so fearful before, have fully proved to the whole world, by a testimony which all the severities of a sanguinary persecution could not frighten them from giving. The same thing is as remarkably evident in the history of the three succeeding centuries. Christ foretold great and terrible persecutions, and also universal success, to his followers. Now did not the refutation of his prophecy, as to the persecutions, lie in the hands of the Jews and Romans? Had they any thing more to do, in order to prove him a false prophet, and consequently an impostor, than only not to persecute? Yet they did persecute, and that most cruelly at times, for the space of three hundred years; and, by that very means, not only verified this prophecy, but also thereby did more towards verifying the other, concerning the successful preaching of Christianity, than they could have done by any other possible expedient; for the wounds of the martyrs were infinitely more eloquent than their mouths.

The compass of a discourse like this will not suffer me to descend into a minute discussion of every thing the subject may seem to require; but I 'speak as to wise men,' who may easily see, by what hath been said of miracles in general, and prophecies in particular, that God hath owned the Scriptures for his word and work; that he hath furnished reason with abundant proofs of this; and that, therefore, to

believe rationally in religious matters, and to be a Christian, is one and the same thing.

I know there are men who will find the way to make light of all this; and I know there were also men who firmly believed in the prophecies relating to the Messiah, and, at the very time prefixed by those prophecies for his appearance, saw Christ work the very miracles which it was foretold he should work, and yet considered, or would have had others consider him, as no better than the instrument of the devil. This their sin against reason, and the highest possible cause of conviction, Christ pronounced unpardonable. They, who in these times follow them in their infidel presumption, no doubt partake of their guilt; for, although they do not see the miracles of Christ, as they did, who ascribed them to the devil, yet there is no one thing in the world they have more reason to believe, especially as they have had all the other proofs afforded in favour of Christianity, since the first committal of the unpardonable crime, whether by miracles, by martyrdoms, or by prophecies fulfilled, from that day to this. Even the false prophets, the false teachers, the false miracles, the heresies, dissensions, schisms, among Christians, although seen through the telescope of infidel malice, as so many dark spots on the bright face of Christianity, do high honour, nevertheless, to its Author, who foretold them all, and, by that means, converted these instruments and efforts of his enemy into so many proofs of his own infinite wisdom and truth, for the full satisfaction of such as shall candidly inquire into the merits of his religion.

Let a rational man now consider, first, the rapid propagation of Christianity, which, in less than half a century, had spread itself through all parts of the Roman empire; had penetrated into the East Indies, Ethiopia, Italy, Spain, Gaul, and Scythia; and, in the space of two hundred years, had converted such numbers in all ranks and conditions of men, that its apologists could boldly tell the emperors, they could not suppress Christianity without subverting their own power. Secondly, Let him consider, that, as fast as this religion advanced, so fast superstition, idolatry, and wickedness, declined, particularly in the Roman empire, at that time remarkably prone, through infinite wealth, and

insolence of power, to universal corruption. And then let him reflect a little, by what instruments it made this prodigious progress, and wrought these glorious effects. Were its preachers all profound philosophers? No, there were few among them who knew more than barely how to read and write. Were they all eloquent orators? No; except St. Paul, there were none of them, for a long time, who understood more of elocution than the plainest tradesman who heard them. Were they all profound politicians? No; of all men they were the simplest, the most artless, the most destitute of address and skill in managing worldly affairs. What then? Did they proselyte the world, like Mahomet, by the sword, by power, and by the expectation of spoil and plunder? No; they were among the very lowest and weakest of the people. The sword was so far from being with them, that, for three hundred years, it was almost continually employed against them; while they opposed it with nothing but patience and resignation. The empire found itself Christian, almost as soon as it ceased to persecute Christianity. And as to the hope of wealth, it was so far from being a temptation to any man to turn Christian, that every one who received baptism, foresaw he must surrender the little wealth he had, either to an imperial, or a voluntary confiscation. How then? Did the ignorant convince and teach the learned? Did the uneloquent persuade the orator? Did the simple circumvent the artful? Did the weak subdue the strong? No; to suppose this, is to suppose a thing in itself absurd and impossible. It was God, who, by the wisdom of his word, convinced and persuaded. It was God, who by the power of his miracles, caught and conquered. That all the world might know it was he alone, he chose men for preachers who had nothing to contribute to the work but a tongue; and, lest they should have any farther share in it, forbad them to study or prepare what they had to say: he chose them, in short, that he might, 'by the foolish things of the world, confound the wise; that he might, by the weak things of the world, confound the things which are mighty; and by the base things of the world, and things that are despised, yea, and by things that are not, bring to nought things that are. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings he ordained strength,' suffi-

cient' to still the enemy and the avenger,' and 'perfected his own praise.'

While the true religion was as yet contending for superiority, and the prophetic promise made to it in that behalf was unaccomplished, some apology might be made for him who suspended his assent till he saw the issue, because the opposition was powerful, the end great, and the means apparently insufficient. But now that prophecies, so unlikely to be true, have been fulfilled; now that instruments, so utterly inefficacious in themselves, have prevailed; all that which at first might have occasioned, or in any degree justified, suspense, serves only to enforce conviction and assent. This great event was not stolen upon the world. A full and timely warning was given of it by the promises and prophecies published in Scripture. The world, alarmed at these, and confiding in its own power, exerted its utmost efforts to prevent their taking place, and thereby to prove the book wherein they were contained was not the word of God. Little did it think it was doing all it could to prove the contrary, which undoubtedly it was; for by what other means could the divinity of the prophecies, and the interposition of Almighty God in favour of his word and religion, have been so amply, so universally, demonstrated, as by an opposition, which must have proved successful, had it not been baffled by a power superior to that of all mankind?

To conclude; if we have reason for believing any thing, it is this; that Christianity is the true religion, and the Bible the word of God. Fully convinced of these great truths, let us now earnestly beseech the gracious Author to give us a right understanding of its necessary doctrines, a steady adherence to all its blessed truths, and a heart and will ever ready to regulate both our faith and practice by the same, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE III.

HOW THE SCRIPTURES ARE TO BE READ.

JOHN v. 39.

Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me.

HAVING, in the former Discourse, proved that the true religion is revealed to us in the books of the Old and New Testament, I intend, in this, to shew, how we ought to read these books, in order to answer the important ends for which they were written. If we consider either those ends, or the foreign and really sinister views, with which the sacred writings are perused by too many, we shall look on this as a subject of infinite consequence to us. May the Holy Spirit enable me to speak with that power, and you to listen with that attention, which the unspeakable dignity of the point demands!

When the words of my text were uttered by our blessed Saviour, the books of the Old Testament were the only Scriptures in being. In those the Jews 'thought they had eternal life;' and Christ neither commends nor censures their judgment. He does not commend it; because those books, considered in themselves, and without an eye to any farther dispensation, did not afford the means of eternal life: nor does he censure it; because those writings, rightly understood, did testify of him, who 'is the way, and the truth, and the life;' John xiv. 6. Now, if what is promised, concerning Christ, in the Old Testament, is, with equal authority, recorded in the New, as fully accomplished, we must look for the means of eternal life in the New, rather than in the Old. The search, however, recommended by Christ, must be made into both, that the whole scheme of our redemption, whether as prophetically promised, or as actually completed, may be understood and taken together.

And here it is necessary we should consider, what sort

of a search this ought to be. The word in the original, whereby it is prescribed, implies a close examination, a thorough scrutiny into the Scriptures. The nature of the thing also points out the same; for it is the word of God we are to search, and eternal life we are to search for. In respect, therefore, both to the majesty of the author, and the dignity of the end, no one thing in the world can be of so much consequence to us, as a right application of our minds to the Book of God.

Taking this for granted, let us inquire, first, With what views; secondly, On what principles; thirdly, With what dispositions; and lastly, By what rules, we ought to read the holy Scriptures.

And first, as to the views; they ought, undoubtedly, to be no other than those which God proposed to himself, in the revelation made by the sacred books.

Should an author write with one intention, and his reader peruse him with another, the absurdity of such a conduct in the reader must be too evident to need any other proofs, than what it gives of itself. Yet that which is but an absurdity in him, who reads a system of morality, in order to learn arithmetic, becomes a flagrant impiety in one who reads the word of God with any other view, than that wherewith it was written. All other authors sometimes trifle in their works, and therefore may be trifled with by their readers; but there is no trifling with the works of God.

With what view then did God become the author of a book? It was not surely to confirm the opinions, nor to countenance the vices, nor to gratify the curiosity, nor to pamper the learned pride, of men: No; it was to teach the world something it did not, or could not, otherwise know; to disabuse it of its religious errors; to correct its vices; to call home its inquiries to necessary instructions; and to teach it the vanity of science, falsely so called. It was infinite mercy that gave birth to this book, and infinite wisdom that furnished the matter. The end therefore proposed by it, must be proportionably great and good. To prevent mistakes, hear what it says itself, concerning this end: 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, tho-

roughly furnished unto all good works;' 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. 'The Scriptures,' says the Spirit of God, ver. 15. 'are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.' They teach us 'to know the only true God, and Christ Jesus, whom he hath sent, which is eternal life;' John xvii. 3. If therefore, we would avoid the impious absurdity of reading the word of God with other views than those for which it was written, we must search it only for the knowledge of God, and our duty, that we may understand what we are to believe and do, in order to be saved. All things necessary to the service of God, and our salvation, are there so clearly revealed, that common sense cannot fail to find them, provided it wisely and honestly searches for nothing else. Other things there are, which are more difficult; but they are less useful, the smaller kernels being inclosed in proportionably thicker shells; which if the weak are not able to open, some one stronger may do it for them; or, in case no one does, they ought not too deeply to regret their loss, since they have a sufficient plenty before them of food more substantial, and much easier digested.

Notwithstanding all the stir that hath been made about the fundamentals of Christianity, what they are, and how to be understood, he who reads the Scriptures with that intention only which God had in publishing them, must infallibly find what he looks for, provided he reads on right principles, and with proper dispositions; which, what they are, we shall presently explain. It was precisely for such men as this, that God committed his revelation to writing; wherein, nevertheless, he must have been wholly disappointed, if minds, so well accommodated to his intentions, cannot arrive at even the foundation of true religion, nor understand its very rudiments. Our endless disputes concerning the essentials of Christianity do not, in the smallest measure, proceed from the obscurity of those essentials, as they are set forth in holy Scripture, but from the obliquity of our own minds, who prompted by our vile affections and prejudices, are ever looking for such informations or proofs as God never intended to give us, frequently indeed for the confirmation of such opinions as it was his main intention to refute. Now, it is no wonder that inquirers of this sort, if wedded to their prejudices, should either endeavour to

pervert the Scripture, by sophistical constructions, or, what is more consistent with reason (since it is more likely God should never speak to us, than that he should speak falsely, or absurdly), reject it in the lump; because it does not speak as they would have it.

What then, in the second place, are the principles on which the word of God is to be read? I will mention only four, without taking up your time in proving them; because they are such as no rational Christian can dispute.

He who reads the Scriptures, in order to the ends for which they were written, must, first, firmly believe, that they are the word of God.

Secondly, He must be fully persuaded, that he himself is neither able to find out, nor perform his duty, so as to arrive at eternal happiness, without the assistance of divine revelation.

Thirdly, He must take it for granted, that God can deliver or aver nothing but the truth.

And, lastly, He must believe, that God knows how so to speak, as to be understood by those he speaks to; and, in necessary matters, could not have chosen to be obscure in what he reveals.

It is, in a great measure, for want of a due attention to these principles, that such infinite disputes and bickerings have arisen, in all ages, among Christians, concerning the very primary articles of faith, and the plainest duties or motives of Christian morality. Did every Christian reader of the Scriptures consider, that he comes ignorant, weak, and under the unhappy weight of a nature corrupt, and prone to sin, when he applies to those books for instruction and assistance; that he is therefore not to bring his preconceptions with him, like one who knows already what he is to think and do; and that he comes to a teacher, who is willing to direct him; who hath made provision for all his wants, and is able to help his infirmities; did he, I say, rightly consider these things, and suitably accommodate his mind to these considerations, he could have no doubts about his success; nor could there be any room for such doubts, if the Scriptures are indeed the word of God. In that case, necessary knowledge only being sought for, the instructions and the disciple are so well fitted to each other, that he

must easily find out 'the way, the truth, and the life,' he seeks for. As sure as God is wise and good, so surely is the way plain and manifest in itself: and as the reader of his word hath nothing to blind him, so he cannot fail to find it.

But, unhappily, few men read this holy book, either as if they thought God had written it, or as if they took their own salvation to depend absolutely on it. They read it with a tincture of Deism, and self-dependence; and therefore do not wholly resign themselves to it; and, in their debates, they quote it, rather as an authority, to which others, more credulous, must yield, than as decisive, in respect to themselves. This is evident from their frequently shifting from one interpretation of the same text to another, when the first does not answer their ends, nor baffle the opponent; just as if they thought it not material what the text meant, provided it could be forced to vouch for their tenet.

This dealing is altogether preposterous, and subversive of itself; for if they believe the Scriptures, and argue from them as conclusive, why are they not allowed to speak for themselves? Why do these men intermix their own prejudices with the Scriptural principles, and press on us the motley consequences of premises so unnaturally conjoined? He must be very stupid that does not see the clumsy seam, which tacks the truths of Scripture to their prejudices, nor the force put on both to make them unite. In other branches of knowledge we found all our reasonings on axioms, peculiar to the points we would prove. But, in regard to religion, we are pestered with arguments, either founded on no axioms, or drawn from other lights, than those of revelation, by disputants who pretend the utmost deference for it. From these foreign axioms they have beat out systems of their own, with which they find it infinitely difficult to reconcile that of Scripture. This is the very thing which distresses the libertine Christians of all denominations. Instead of making their principles bend to the Scriptures, they preposterously and impiously make the Scriptures veil to their principles, on a postulatum that reason (by which they mean their reason) is the dernier resort in all sciences; which is so far from being true, that the very faculty, by which we reason, is forced in every argu-

ment to appeal for the grounds of its deductions, to the simple apprehensions wherein those notices are received, that admit of no dispute. Here are lodged those first principles of religion, that God is true; and that those senses which gave testimony to the miraculous proofs of our religion were not deceived. These axioms erect every plain assertion of Scripture into an axiom equally indisputable among all, who believe the Scripture to be the word of God.

If the word of God is admitted as the rule of religion, no axioms, or first principles, can be drawn from any other source, for the establishment of a theological system. The independent fancies and reasonings of men are by no means to be associated with this rule. All the disputes and errors among Christians have arisen from this monstrous position, that revelation was given us only in aid of natural religion; whereas it was really intended for our only guide to God, while the sole office of sense and reason, in respect to religion, is 'to apprehend, and be apprehended' by, that guide; Phil. iii. 12. As to the dictates of mere nature, as it is found at present, they have all along experimentally proved themselves not only inadequate to this purpose, but rather, in the bulk of mankind, the corrupters of true religion, ever mistaking their authority for greater than it was, and confounding the truth, as often as they were suffered to prescribe, with infinite blunders and inconsistencies. If God hath given us two religious lights, they ought not, surely, to destroy each other; but as, on the contrary, that which was last afforded, must have been given, because the first was found deficient, the first ought to yield, whenever they appear to interfere. He who believes the Scriptures, and yet abides by the dictates of his nature, when they seem to contradict their own Scriptures, pays a compliment to his own understanding, at the expense of his respect for God's wisdom and veracity; and he provides not a whit better for the preservation of that respect, who endeavours to warp the word of God to his favourite preconceptions.

The judicious see, we have had enough, and too much, of this work already; and that Christianity and Deism can never be so coupled together, as to produce any other children than monsters. We must either follow Scripture, and be Christians; or follow nature, and be Deists; or we may

ideed be Atheists, and follow nothing. There is no sense or safety in halting between opinions and principles so irreconcilable. No two of these three can ever possibly palesce, but in a head capable of quietly lodging contradictions together. For instance, what sort of principles are is, who, placing himself between Deism and Atheism, beeves in God, and denies the retributions of another life? nd what sort of principles, are theirs, who, taking their tand between Christianity and Deism, hold a morality and anctions independent of God's animadversions; and diselieve every thing they cannot account for, with the one, hile they maintain the truth of revelation, with the other? Iay not God justly say to these men, as he did to the abylonians and Chaldeans, 'Your wisdom and your knowedge, it hath perverted you?'

It may seem amazing, that one who believes the Scriptures to be the word of God, should ever once think of suffering any thing else to dictate religious principles to him; nd still more amazing, that he should suffer his other dictator, if he must have another, to lay violent hands on the criptures, and, by arbitrary expositions, prescribe to God imself. Yet we see this done, by too numerous classes of nen, every day. The bigots to superstition and libertinism, lthough they set out under infallible guides, wholly opposite, I mean Popery and self-sufficiency, follow, nevertheless, he same impious method of so expounding Scripture, as to orce from it whatsoever those guides are pleased to dictate. Are the Scriptures so very pliant as to yield to these extremes? No; so far from that, they condemn both as peremptorily, as they could have done, had they been written but yesterday, purely for that purpose.

Of all the human species, not excepting thieves, robbers, nd assassins, they are the vilest sort of men, who artfully abour to shelter those private opinions, which vanity or interest hath induced them to espouse, under the sanction of Scriptural authority, though they see this cannot be done without doing violence to the word of God. The Scriptures were given to instruct, reform, and save mankind; but these monsters of dissimulation and impiety use them only to pervert, corrupt, and ruin themselves. Having no concern about their own salvation, they no more care what comes of

the souls, than Cæsar did what came of the bodies, of other men, so they may obtain a victory, make a triumph, and lord it afterward over the reason and faith of a misguided multitude. As the opinions they contend for are generally the very reverse of those doctrines, on which the Scripture lays the greatest stress, so none are obliged to search it so narrowly as these men, who mean to quote it exactly, as the devil did in his polemical controversy with Christ, in direct opposition to its true import, and for the very same end, that they may be worshipped. What then? Were so many prophecies uttered, so many miracles wrought; were both the law and the gospel written; and did Christ die, merely to give these worthies (who are taught to squint from the truth by interest, as well as vanity) an opportunity of shewing the superiority of their talents, by forcing God's word to prove in one place, what it expressly denies in another? Enormous impudence! infernal sacrilege!

Now, as to the dispositions wherewith, in the third place, the holy Scriptures ought to be perused, they may, I think, be comprehended in humility and diligence.

With what degree of humility we ought to read the word of God, we may judge by that respect we feel for the works of an eminent uninspired writer. We always compare the ideas we have of his and our own understandings together; and read him with deference and resignation proportionable to the apprehended superiority of his abilities over our own. We dwindle in our own eyes, as an Homer, or a Newton, grows in our esteem, till the error of the one begins to assume the authority of a demonstration, and the blemish of the other passes on us for a beauty. But be our admiration of a mere man what it will, we, nevertheless, always read the works with some respect for our own judgment, and take the liberty, sometimes to doubt or disapprove of what he says, because we know he may err: whereas, when we read the works of God, all this use of our judgment is, or ought to be, as totally superseded, as if our reason were annihilated; because we know he cannot err, because we know our reason is less than nothing to his wisdom. From this humility, which, when the Book of God is open before us, cannot be too deep, should arise modesty in respect to our own understandings, and veneration for the wisdom of God.

The reasons for modesty in respect to our own understandings, proceed from a consciousness of our ignorance, which (let folly wonder at it as much as it will) is always greatest in him who knows most; for this reason, because the more sense and penetration he is master of, the better able he is to see into his own defects, and find out the limits of his own capacity: whereas an unthinking man cannot see, shallow as he is, to the bottom of his own depth, for the confusion and mud that lie above it; nor view the extent of his own capacity, narrow as it is, for the mist that overspreads it. In this I am supported by experience, and by the wisest of men, who saith, 'A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil; but the fool rageth, and is confident. The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge;' because he is sensible he hath not yet enough. The wisdom he hath already acquired is as the seed of more in the kindly soil of his modesty, which is ever reminding him of his defects and wants. 'But there is more hope of a fool, than of him who is wise in his own conceit;' which flatteringly tells him, he is full, and can hold no more; or, although he could, there is no more to be laid in.

A man of sense, before he applies to the word of God, should consider, how little he knows of true religion, for which he is not beholden to his instructors; and how absolutely ignorant he must have been of its first principles, had they never been suggested to him by others. His deductions from these, so slowly and so precariously made, will equally serve to humble him; and, at the same time that he sees so little room for depending on his own researches, he is as fully convinced of the insufficiency, for the same reasons, of other men, considered as uninstructed themselves. He knows the unenlightened nations are, to this day, sunk in almost total ignorance of true religion. He can hope for little from the philosophy of the ancients, inasmuch as he perceives their most exalted geniuses, Socrates, Plato, Cicero, groping their way to Divine truths, with infinite anxiety, and little success; gleaning traditions, catching at oracles, forcing conclusions; and, after all, only convinced of the prevailing errors, without being able to substitute any certain system of truths. From hence he may take modesty at the rebound, and ask himself, if such men could do so little, what progress he

should have made, or shall be able hereafter to make, if left to his own unassisted efforts, or the aids of other men, equally unenlightened by the Divine Instructor?

His modesty, founded on these reflections, cannot, you see, be confined to his own inability, but distrusts for that of the whole species at large. He perceives others are not much better qualified for the investigation of true religion than himself; but so far as he or they know any thing of the matter, he can trace that knowledge, through a continued succession of teachers, up to Divine revelation; and, if his skill in antiquity is considerable, can see where the influx of conceit and conjecture, of human invention and priestcraft, of superstition on the one side, or libertinism on the other, hath carried the mud of foreign mixtures into the stream of religious tradition. But how to extract the limpid truth from such a compound of impurities, he will still be at a loss to know, without recurring to his judgment, which alone can distinguish what flowed from the rock, from that which ran from fens and morasses. In case he hath sense enough to see how utterly incapable he and all other men are, to be their own directors, in an inquiry after knowledge so remote from the senses, he is then, so far, a fit disciple for God; and, if he is convinced the Scriptures are his word, will open them with that veneration which becomes the disciple of such a Master.

To a man not blinded by a high opinion of his own abilities, the Book of God will appear, though written in the language of men, in every respect worthy of its Author. Here, he who gave us being, teaches us to know ourselves, by a discovery both of our origin, and our nature. Here, our minds are anatomized by the hand that formed them, and the springs of error and corruption, of sin and death, laid open. Here, the only remedies of these internal disorders are exhibited in evidences sufficient to satisfy our reason, and in motives and expedients sufficient to captivate our affections. To this true theory of our nature, long sought for in vain by philosophy, is added such a knowledge of him, who gave being to all things, and such a history of his awful or gracious dealings with men, as affords us a thorough insight into true religion, while it throws light on both the natural and moral world. In this sacred

book are displayed the miracles of infinite power in creating, of unfathomable wisdom in governing, and of boundless goodness in redeeming the world; and a majesty of style so adequate to the grandeur, the immensity of the subjects, that it is matter of just amazement to an uninspired writer, though of the most elevated talents, how much force and dignity could have been given to words, generally indeed to the simplest and coolest words, of those languages, in which this wonderful book is written. How the most grovelling imagination soars on its descriptions! How the insensible heart melts, when touched by its heavenly strains of piety! How the stubborn heart trembles at the thunder of its menaces! Can the languages of men be the only vehicle of that spirit we feel, when we peruse this book? Or is there not something else unseen, unheard, that speaks to our understandings in light, and to our hearts in fire, while our senses entertain the letter of God's word? How would that philosopher have been transported with the study of these venerable volumes, who saw error and wickedness in all the theology of the pagan world; who sought in vain for sufficient lights in philosophy, and oral tradition; who inferred from thence the necessity of a divine instructor; and who, with the most penetrating understanding that ever shone in a mere man, confessed he knew nothing, and died a martyr to a negative religion! In what a despicable light do the modest and sensible declarations of this prodigious man set the scoffs of the libertine scorner, who says he needs no religious instruction, and ridicules the Scriptures as low, tasteless, and weak performances! There is nothing displays the stupidity of a genuine blockhead so egregiously, as his conceited grin at the wisdom, and his unfeeling numbness at the pathos, of a well written book; nor is there any thing can so justly figure him to our imagination, as a wild boar in a flower-garden, rooting up, and trampling under foot, the beauties of nature. Let us leave the contemner of God's word to amuse himself with his Pilkington, and his Woolston, that he may laugh at things sacred, and, with Solomon's fool, 'make a mock at sin,' at his own sins, which another, of common sense and humanity, can hardly behold without tears; and let us return to the man of sound sense and piety, who, diffident of his own understanding, and highly venerat-

ing the wisdom of God, is desirous to enter on the study of his word, that we may suggest to him a third disposition of mind, arising from the conjunction of these two with an ingenuous love of truth, which it is necessary he should cultivate in himself, in order to a profitable search into the Scriptures.

And this is candour, or a readiness to close with truth, the moment it makes its appearance. In all our debates, we are willing enough to compliment ourselves with this generous attribute; yet, nevertheless, we are usually either so insensible to the force of reason, or so tenacious of our opinions, or else, on all sides, so eternally right, that nothing is given up, no exchange of sentiments made. There is, indeed, in this matter, a self-deceit, which it is not easy to see to the bottom of. We are apt to be extremely fond of our prepossessions, through habit, if we had them from education; and through vanity, if they are the dictates of our own judgment. When we peruse the Scriptures under the influence of this attachment, we contemplate their sense through the medium of our own opinions, rather than through that of the words; we give a cursory attention to passages that seem to speak against us, and dwell with pleasure on such as appear to second our own previous way of thinking; and if we are not blessed with uncommon candour, the exposition given by a commentator must be very slight, to be rejected, when it is for us; and very strongly supported, to be received, when it is against us. But we should consider, that our opinions, before they are maturely examined, may as well be against us, as for us; that the resignation of a wrong opinion, instead of reflecting any discredit on us, is the strongest proof both of a good head and heart, and consequently does us the highest honour; and that we can in nothing be more unhappy, than in being precipitately wedded, for better for worse, and that with a violent, but blind affection to a harlot principle, that lies in our bosom, deceiving our judgment, and poisoning our conscience; which may be the case, for aught we can tell, till it is severely canvassed. Besides, if it is an error, as long as it holds possession, it keeps out the opposite truth, which may possibly be a matter of infinite consequence to us.

Now, the authority of the divine books is as well quali-

fied to force this bias from the mind, as their wisdom is to set it straight, when thus disencumbered. But then, to give it its full swing within us, we ought always feelingly to remember, that we, who are ignorant and erroneous creatures, are perusing the word of God, who cannot be mistaken. This should teach us resignation. He is a presumptuous fool, who repairs to God for the confirmation of his own principles, and not for information. It was to teach us better principles than our own, that a revelation was given us.

If God is our teacher, we must give him leave to go foremost, and not impiously expect he should only follow to vouch for every fancy we please to form. As then we are to read the word of God for information, we must look for two kinds of benefit; first, to be taught such truths as we were wholly ignorant of before; and, secondly, to be disabused of such errors as had formerly stolen our assent, when the means, or attention to the means, of better knowledge, was wanting. In such an expectation, instead of wishing to see our prejudices, which are more likely to be wrong than right, supported, we should only wish for sense and resolution enough to discard them with contempt, in case they shall be condemned in the word of God. As a riveted attachment to prepossessions of any kind, is the strongest proof of a foolish, a dastardly, and a slavish, mind; so, on the other hand, there is nothing that gives us so high an idea of a man, as to see him, with a noble dignity and strength of soul, shaking off the long-worn fetters of prejudice, and emerging out of inveterate errors into the free exercise of reason. A soul thus prepared to break through all impediments of education, pleasure, interest, or self-sufficiency, and to run into the arms of truth, with a mind open to conviction, and an honest ardour of heart, is one of the most pleasing objects which the all-seeing eye can behold. The holy Scriptures were written peculiarly for such a soul as this, who is transparent to every ray of light they send forth.

But here two things are to be noted; first, that a man may be prejudiced in favour of the truth; and, after his principle is brought to the test, may shake off the prejudice and yet retain the truth, on the strength of a rational con-

viction; and, secondly, that whereas we cannot divest ourselves of our prepossessions, till we see reason sufficient, to prove them erroneous; I do not mean, by what I have said, that we should abdicate our anti-scriptural opinions, before we have read the Scriptures, and perceived them condemned therein; but that we should so hold them at bay, as to give them no vote in the interpretation of Scripture, nor a licence to stay longer with us, than the sacred oracles appear to patronise them; I mean also, that we should be as clear sighted, and as ready to give them up for the infinitely better dictates of Scripture, as we are to distinguish a guinea from a shilling, and to exchange the latter, though long kept, for the former, which we never saw before. In this instance, and all others relating to our worldly interest, sense and reason operate freely; and why should they not rather shew their power over us in matters of religion, for which sense and reason were given us? But some men keep their religious prepossessions, like pocket-pieces, which they will neither use, nor part with, for truths of ten thousand times the value.

The other disposition of mind requisite, in order to a profitable perusal of the Scriptures, is diligence; without which, little benefit is to be expected, either by those who search them with an eye to controversy, or those who do it only with a view to reformation of manners.

To the first, I must beg leave to observe, that the word of God is too intelligible, as to fundamentals, to need more than an ordinary capacity, and a moderate degree of attention, provided the reader is blessed with an humble and candid turn of mind. In matters less necessary, it is not always so plain. Now, whereas both lie together in one book, and are often closely connected, the wrong-headed reader, instead of viewing these latter by the light reflected on them from the former, is too apt to fix his attention on the darker and less essential passages; and, through the obscurity arising from thence, hath but a dim perception of such as are in themselves more clear; or else absurdly confounds both together? from whence it frequently happens, that he either heretically degrades an essential, or schismatically contends about an extra-essential, of religion. But neither of these, nor both together, occasion half the diffi-

culties in searching the Scriptures, that the prejudices of mankind do, who, reading under a bias, magnify the real obscurities, and raise up others where there are none; for, to support a favourite opinion, which they can no more surrender than a distempered limb, they are obliged to darken the plain passage, which makes against it, and wrest a number of others, in order that they may oppose that sense of it which they do not like. Hence infinite volumes of contradictory commentaries and tracts, as well on fundamentals, as other points, which have rendered the controversial study of the Scriptures one of the most perplexed and difficult branches of learning. Now, as there is no convincing a man by Scripture, till you have refuted his exposition of Scripture, it is easy to see what a compass must be taken, to enforce conviction, and sometimes even to come at satisfaction, on any one disputed point, if we are to take the judgments of other men in our way. To disembarrass ourselves or others, even by the help of Scripture, so artfully expounded by various sects, and, on the strength of those expositions, so plausibly alleged, for opposite purposes, in books, where it lies intermixed with the infinite subtleties of those who quote it, is indeed no easy task. Unhappily there is not one of us whose mind is not charged with more or less of this medley, and so tinctured with it, that, in reading the word of God, we can hardly separate his meaning from that which hath been tacked to it, for some time, in our heads. It is owing to this, that a passage, plain in itself as the light, being viewed through the coloured spectacles of this or that exposition, perhaps of two or three expositions at once, looks dark, confused, or opposite in its sense to other passages, concerning which we have hitherto had no doubt. It is very remarkable, that when we read a chapter or two in the Bible, we generally find them plain and intelligible enough; but if we, immediately afterward, consider them in a commentary, we are surprised to find them all turned into riddles. Every verse requires a paraphrase; and it is odds it does not escape an annotation beside, where it is often made to speak what the writer never intended; because he was of no particular sect, but a Christian, who only set down what God dictated. These and the like freedoms taken

with Scripture, make great diligence and application necessary in him who studies it as a controvertist.

But that the candid, the diligent, and learned searcher of the Scriptures may give himself as fair an opportunity as possible to find out its real sense, let us now in the last place, suggest the rules, by which his inquiries ought to be regulated.

If his mind is humbly conscious of its own inability to instruct itself, deeply penetrated with awe and veneration for the book of God, and candidly disposed to surrender its prepossessions to the dictates of divine wisdom; having left himself nothing but his pure reason to be applied to the sacred writings; it will be worth his while to hear what the true use of that faculty is in this application.

Nothing seems to be worse understood, nor more disputed, than this very important point. Some men tell us, it is impious to use our reason, when God is speaking to us, and would have us keep back our faculties from interfering with the dictates of an omniscient Instructor. Others give their reason a kind of check over the word of God, and, when they seem to clash, endeavour to bend the Scriptures to a meaning more agreeable to what they call reason, than that which appears to be its obvious sense, as if their reason were the safer guide of the two.

The first are guilty of an error against the nature God hath given them; it being impossible for any man to be convinced, that through the inlets of knowledge, and the rational faculties, which God hath endued him with by nature. And the second are guilty of as gross an error; because God is wiser than man. Solomon, rightly understood, seems to have ruled the point: he says, 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding.' This, as indeed right reason does, sets the judgment of God above our own. But does it exclude the use of reason? No; it only bids reason yield to the infinitely superior wisdom of God, when that is known to have dictated somewhat, which reason, left to itself, would have ruled the contrary way, on a certainty that God cannot err, and that the reason of any particular man may. This, however, leaves reason its proper province in religious matters un-

touched; which consists precisely in finding out the true and real meaning of the divine dictates, howsoever notified, and teaching the mind to acquiesce in that with as full conviction, when it contradicts, as when it coincides with, the deductions of our own judment. The dictates of God, and right reason, can never be contrary. Whenever God says one thing, and the reason of any man another, reason must have erred. Be the maxims of any man what they will, he can have no maxim so much to be depended on, as that God is true in all he says; nor form any conclusion so certain, as that we are firmly to believe what God tells us, though ever so seemingly or really contrary to other points formerly received as truths.

But here it is to be observed, that before reason yields up its judgment to any proposition, as asserted by God, it must first have more certainty, that it was so asserted, and that it understands the true sense and meaning of that proposition, than it hath, that the other proposition, which it yields, is true; for when it hath less, it must give up the Scriptures. There is no middle way, no warping the sense of a book, which we take to be the work of God. The office of reason therefore, in respect to a revelation once admitted, is by no means that of an informant, but of an expositor. Scripture, if we are fully satisfied it is the word of God, must dictate absolutely to our understandings, and not our understandings in any measure, to Scripture. If we are sensible of our own insufficiency, and determined to follow the Scriptures, we must read them with the utmost resignation to what they set forth, so far as we, on a fair exposition, understand it. Our preconceptions are not to intrude, nor shelter themselves, right or wrong, under the authority of revelation. Neither are we so to bring its determinations, and our interfering judgments, together, as to beget a sort of middle or spurious principles, which, like monsters, must carry the features of parents, that have no resemblance to each other.

In reading other books for information, we take their meaning by the words, as they lie. Why should we not deal in the same manner by the book of God? Is he the only author who knew not how to express himself? Or may we arbitrarily put what interpretation we please on his

words? In perusing other books, we are, in a greater or less degree, always knowing readers, and take the liberty, as such, to dissent from our author, as often as we think he dissents from reason and truth. But, in reading the book of God, we read on the supposition of total ignorance in ourselves, of unerring wisdom in the writer, and of great depth often in the matter. You that read the book of God to gratify an impertinent curiosity, or to pick out proofs for your own opinions, or with any tincture of a reserve, or an appeal to your own previous judgment, know, that you are a poor despicable mortal, equally ignorant and vain. You are blind, but you do not know it; wicked, but you do not feel it. On both accounts, there are men of moderate capacities, who are fit to be your teachers; and yet you set up to be the teacher of God.

If we are thoroughly convinced God is the author of the Bible, we must conclude there are no impertinent nor useless notices communicated to us therein, nor any obscurity in things necessary. What then is left for our reason to do? but to judge reverently and candidly of its sense, and to submit to that without reserve. The truth is, it must oftener happen, that our simple apprehension is requisite, than our reason, to find the meaning of God, which, for the most part, is too plain to need or admit a disquisition. When the private opinions of any man happen to differ with the express words of Scripture, if he hath common sense or modesty, it will be easy for him to see which ought to give way; for if his opinions are right, then the Scriptures are not the word of God; and if they are not his word, then, infinitely good and gracious as he is, he hath not yet afforded us the means of true religion. He who, by proceeding on a contrary maxim, is led first into a counterfeit Christianity of his own invention, and then into Deism, may consider this, and afterward judge for himself, whether, on his principles, he hath not yet a farther step to make.

There are other rules whereby the ingenuous controvertist, whose understanding is thus divested of prejudices, and confined to its proper office, may direct himself in the study of the holy Scriptures.

In the first place, as he ought to be a competent master of the original languages, so it is necessary, above all things,

that he fix to himself the right sense of the leading terms; more especially of the names of God; of the appellations, Father, Son, Holy Ghost, the Messiah, and the like; and of the words, inspiration, miracles, faith, worship, covenant, atonement, sacrifice, &c. Now, as these are common words, he cannot do better than to understand them, for the most part, in the common acceptation; because it is not to be supposed, the Holy Spirit should apply these terms, so generally used, to any other than the accustomary ideas, without giving notice of an application so unexpected. If this is done with due care and skill, and without any view to the proof of this or that particular tenet, it will infinitely facilitate and enhance the use of the next rule:

Which consists in a clear and determinate conception of the main or essential doctrines, which are always more strongly insisted on, more copiously and variously expressed, and consequently in a more precise and ample manner revealed, than other matters of less moment. If these fundamental articles are once well cleared up and known, they will serve, as first principles or axioms, to ascertain a world of other points, more briefly intimated, or couched in darker terms. There are but few passages in Scripture, especially of the doctrinal kind, that have not more or less connexion with some one or other of the fundamentals; and in proportion as they have, the light, that issues from the fundamental, may be trained along that connexion, till it is brought near enough to dissipate the difficulty.

The third rule is, that of explaining the figurative by the literal, and the darker by the plainer passages, when the same thing happens to be expressed both ways in different parts of the Scripture. By this expedient innumerable difficulties may be removed, and the New Testament may be used as an authentic commentary on the Old.

The fourth rule is, carefully to consider the context of a doubtful expression, that, the design of the writer being known, such a sense of the words may be found as they will bear apart, and as that design evidently requires. Of all methods, this is the most at hand, in every difficulty, and, if closely pursued, will generally save the trouble of going to a greater distance in the Scripture for clearer passages to the same purpose; which, however, is often necessary,

and ought to satisfy the inquirer; because the whole Scriptures, being dictated by the same infallible Spirit, are to be considered as one connected context.

The fifth rule is, that one plain assertion, especially if it be negative, as 'Beside me there is no God,' is to determine the point it makes for, against any number of darker passages, that may seem to intimate the contrary; and against all deductions of our own drawing from plainer passages, howsoever necessary these deductions may appear. The meaning we pick out of an obscure passage may happen not to be that of the author, but our own; and therefore is never to be set in competition with a plain express assertion of God. Much less is a consequence, of our own forming, to be opposed to such expressions; because it is sufficient evidence of its fallacy, that it contradicts the direct assertion of the Holy Spirit. The usefulness, or rather necessity, of this rule, will appear best by an instance. Christ, or the Word, says, 'My Father is greater than I.' From hence it seems necessarily to follow, that if the Father is God, the Son, or Word, cannot be God, in direct contradiction to the Holy Ghost, who says, 'There is but one God,' and, 'The Word was God.' Here, it is plain, the conclusion ought to be given up, though we could not discover its fallacy, merely because drawn by a fallible man, directly against the express assertion of the unerring God; or at least that the authority of the Scriptures ought to be denied, on the supposition of a contradiction found in them. But why should not the conclusion be given up, since, it is possible Christ may have had two natures, in him, so as to have been less than the Father in respect to the one, and equal to him in respect to the other? This instance sufficiently shews, how apt our own deductions are to deceive us. Yet such is the pride and self-sufficiency of some men, that they must needs have a hand in making Scripture for themselves; and what is the most preposterous effect of their pride, they are generally more tenacious of the precarious conclusions drawn by themselves, than of the great truths of Scripture, which expressly condemn those conclusions.

If any passage happens not to be cleared up to the satisfaction of the inquirer, by these methods of searching the Scriptures themselves, he ought then, in the last place, to

hear what others have to say on the subject, in their commentaries or conversation; because it is possible, that the unwilling truth, which he was not able to bolt, may be discovered by another more sagacious. But, in this case, as he ought only to wish for a satisfactory solution, not for any particular solution, and to consider those whom he consults with, howsoever famous for their judgment and learning, as no more than fallible men; it is his business to beware, that neither his own propensities, nor the authority of a great name, put too precipitate an end to his inquiry.

It now only remains, that we say a word or two to those who search the Scriptures purely with an eye to their own reformation or virtue. These, though the plainer, are undoubtedly the wiser sort of Christians. The grand end of revelation was, to teach us what we should believe and do, in order to be saved. The design therefore of God in giving, and of these readers in receiving, the Scriptures, is one and the same.

But it must be observed, that the practical searcher of God's word stands in as great need of candour and diligence as the controversial. If the latter hath his prejudices, to surmount, the former hath his vicious inclinations to subdue. As the one may be tempted to warp and bend the Scriptures to his private opinions, so the other may be too apt to soften them into an indulgence for those vices which they were given to correct. Humility therefore, and candour, and resignation, to the dictates of God, are equally necessary in both cases.

Diligence also is equally requisite; because although the fundamentals of our faith, the practical principles, and the sanctions of the Christian covenant, are most clearly revealed; yet, whereas, through the miserable depravity of human nature, the exercise of vigilance, devotion, and mortification, are generally distasteful to us, a continual and close attention to the means of reformation becomes so necessary, that it cannot be remitted, without an immediate relapse into sin and wickedness. Now, as the means of reformation are set before us in the Scriptures, those sacred volumes are therefore incessantly to be perused and studied, that deep and lasting impressions of our duty, and the motives to our duty, may be not only taken off, but per-

petually refreshed and renewed. The libertine transgressor, however, will not read them; because he contemns them. The believing, but hardened sinner, dares not read them; because they threaten him, in every page, with the judgments of God, temporal and eternal.

But the sincere and thinking Christian, who in vain exerts his natural strength against his corruptions, flies to them as his only resource; because in them he clearly sees what he is to do, and what to avoid; how closely all his thoughts, words, and actions, are inspected by infinite wisdom, how awfully and severely he is to be judged by Almighty God, in all his majesty, before angels and men; and how gloriously he is to be rewarded, or how dreadfully punished, for the life he is now leading. He there also sees the infinite benefit that may be drawn from the contemplation of his covenant with God, and a strict adherence to the ordinances of pure religion. He can no where see virtue and vice painted in such heightening colours, nor exemplified in such striking characters. He is, therefore, to read and meditate on the word of God with all possible diligence, veneration, and affection; because he reads for his life and his soul.

But he is to remember, that he also is, in some measure, a controversial reader. He is engaged in controversy, of infinite importance, with his baptismal enemies; and these are subtle disputants indeed, who, by a species of sophistry not easily parried, endeavour to prove, that good is evil, and evil good; and that it is better to be vicious than virtuous. In order to this, they draw their arguments not only from passion, affection, and the allurements of temptation, but even from an appearance of reason, nay, and sometimes from the very Scriptures themselves.

As the tempter hath not yet ceased to quote Scripture, they who search it against him, ought to do it by the rules laid down for the controversial perusal of it, that, as our Saviour did, they may baffle his misapplied quotations by others that cannot be wrested. This cunning adversary knows full well how to argue with them, from that part of their nature which they are most inclinable to follow, and to help out his too pleasing plea, by alleging such passages of Scripture as magnify the mercy of God towards the infirmi-

ties of men, and by relaxing such as most severely threaten vice with the effects of divine justice. If we may judge by the warm apologies frequently made for actions apparently wicked, we must conclude, a right rule of action is not naturally so clear a point in practice, with some, as it is in speculation, with others. And, considering with what delight at first, and triumph afterward, men frequently do such things, as their consciences strongly protest against, it is evident they stand in need of something farther, than they are yet aware of, to restrain the enormity, and correct the depravity, of their affections. Revelation affords us this. To revelation therefore we ought to have recourse; but ought to search it with candour, lest we be deceived; and with diligence, lest we should, at any time, lose sight of those powerful aids it affords us towards a thorough reformation of our manners.

To conclude; if any man, on a thorough examination, hath found the Scriptures to be the word of God, what hath he farther to do, than to read them with the diligence and humility of a learner? How should we listen, were God to speak to us face to face? Just so should we listen, when he speaks to us out of his Scriptures, attentive only to hear and understand what he says; more fully persuaded of its truth, than of any other truths; and as ready to obey whatsoever he enjoins, as if the happiness of heaven was to be the immediate reward. If God speaks to us, does he not so speak, especially in matters of the last consequence, as to be understood? And if we understand him, surely we must believe and obey him. But, if in any thing he hath been silent, in that we should be silent too, taking it for granted, that it is a thing we ought not to know: or, if in some things he speaks mysteriously, we are only concerned to believe as far as we understand; and to conclude, either that the divine author, for wise and good reasons known to himself, thought fit to leave the matter in some obscurity; or that the nature of the thing itself made greater plainness impossible to our clouded apprehension, and narrow capacities. When we have enriched our understandings with a clear conception, and lively impression, of all the fundamentals, we are not to think the Bible may be laid aside: no; these impressions are to be made still stronger, and

our improvement carried higher, by a continual perusal of God's word, wherein, if we should spend our whole lives, we should, to the last find new beauty, new excellence, new force, darting on us from unnumbered passages, that, in all our former readings, were overlooked, as not containing any thing extraordinary. This is a bottomless mine of jewels, whereof the very rubbish is gold and silver, prepared to set off the lustre of its emeralds and diamonds. If we can be affected only with things sensible, in God's word we may find such as are spiritual clothed in a body, and so accommodated to ourselves, that while their beauty is admired, nothing else can give pleasure; while their terrors are apprehended, no earthly pains can be felt. Here all is great, all affecting, fit for God to utter, and man to hear with every faculty of his soul. Let us, therefore, 'draw near, and hear what the Lord will say unto us; for the words he speaketh unto us, they are spirit, and they are life.'

And let us draw near by prayer; for, without God's assistance, we can neither bring with us that humility and candour, nor that diligence, so necessary to a profitable study of the Scriptures; neither are we to depend altogether on the strength of our own talents, as sufficient to interpret the word of God, inasmuch as they are naturally dead to true religion, and shut up against the knowledge of divine things. The Spirit of God, that inspired the sacred penmen, is the best interpreter of his own dictates. Let us, therefore, beseech him 'to open our understandings, that we may underderstand the Scriptures.' Let us earnestly beseech him, who hath caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, to grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of his holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which he hath given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE UNITY OF GOD PROVED.

ISAIAH XLIV. 8.

Is there a God besides me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any.

I ONCE little imagined it could ever be necessary to prove in a congregation, calling themselves Christians, that there is but one God; a point so fundamental to the whole of our religion, that not a single article of our faith can be true, if this be false. If without the belief of God we must be Atheists, it is as plain, that without the belief of his Unity we must be Pagans. There was nevertheless of old, and is at this day, a numerous sect, that styles itself Christian, and yet believes in, and worships, more gods than one. But I hope, before this Discourse is brought to an end, it will evidently appear, that reason must be disclaimed, and Scripture renounced; or a plurality of gods rejected, as both senseless and impious. It is hard to say, whether, had God never vouchsafed us the light of revelation, we should even at this day, have, by the force of reason only, been able to make his Unity a clear point to our understandings. The ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, did not do it; and the knowing Chinese, as well as the barbarous Americans and Africans, are still far from doing it. The Scriptures therefore afford us the best lights, and the most satisfactory proofs, in this most important point of knowledge. However, now that God hath been pleased to discover the great truth, reason is surprised at herself for having been so long in the dark about it, and is able to demonstrate the point she could not find out. If this is the case, it will be worth our while to let her open the cause a little, before a superior advocate is called to its defence.

In order to determine the question, whether there is one only, or more gods, we must know what God is, and here a difficulty may seem to arise, inasmuch as this Being cannot

be defined. But it is none. It is enough to say, he is the infinite Being, which, at the same time that it excludes all possibility of a definition, sufficiently distinguishes him to our understandings from all other beings, and shews what it is alone, which we are to pray to, and adore.

Now that which demonstrates his being, points out to us, with equal clearness, the unity of that Being; and shews us, that, as there is a God, so there can be precisely but one.

That we ourselves, and all other things which fall under the observation of our senses, or offer themselves, by any medium of knowledge, as objects of our more internal faculties, one only excepted, are finite and bounded beings, is a truth which a very little reflection will convince us of. They are bounded in their extent, and passive powers, if material; in their active powers, if mental. Such beings could not have been the primary causes, either of themselves, or other things: of themselves they could not, because the act of creating supposes existence in the agent, previous to that act; nor of other things, because it requires unlimited power to raise any thing out of nothing. Neither could they have been self-existent, because in that case they must have been unlimited, and independent as to existence, which is absurd; for no two things can be unlimited or infinite in any one respect, inasmuch as each could not possess the whole of any one attribute. Although it were possible to conceive, that two or more beings might have two or more attributes unlimited, and that each of them might have a share of any one; yet to suppose that each can have all, is a flat contradiction. But he, who is self-existent, hath independent, and therefore unlimited, existence; or, to express it better, he hath perfect existence, which can neither be so multiplied, or divided, as to leave perfect existence to another. A self-existent being must exist necessarily and eternally; necessarily, because, if we take away the necessity of his existence, it becomes indifferent whether he exists or not, unless by the will of another, which is wholly contrary to the idea of self-existence; and eternally, because no being can arise out of nothing, but by the will and power of a prior cause, which totally destroys the supposition of self-existence. A necessarily self-existent being must therefore exist through all duration. He must also exist through all space; for if

we could suppose him not to exist in any particular part of space, we might as well suppose him not to exist in another part of it, and so on in all; which would take away the necessity of his existence, and reduce him either to a dependent being, or non-existence. Hence it appears, that there can be but one infinite, unlimited being; and that all other beings must have had a beginning, and may have an end. They must therefore have borrowed being from some sufficient cause. But what cause would have been sufficient to raise them out of nothing, and to bestow such beauty of form, such harmony of qualities, such excellence of nature, on them? None less than infinite; infinite in duration, otherwise nothing could have been produced for want of a first cause; infinite in power and wisdom, or nothing could have been produced so useful, so perfect, as the works of creation are in their kind, nor so good and happy as the intellectual part of it may be, for want of a sufficient cause.

From hence again it appears, that there can be but one infinite, that is, one unlimited, being; and that two such are a contradiction, inasmuch as they must limit each other. Infinite is improperly attributed to creatures, and only in respect to our limited capacities. Thus it is that matter is said to be infinitely divisible. And even when infinity is ascribed to space and duration, we ascribe them to nothing, and therefore speak absurdly, if space and duration be not considered as attributes of the one real Infinite. Absolute, real infinity, can therefore be the attribute of one being only, and can admit neither division nor multiplicity.

Neither can it admit defect in the smallest degree; because defect implies limitation. Of all defects, folly and sin are the greatest instances of weakness and limitation, and therefore the farthest removed from the nature of a true infinite. Moral necessity is the next; because it excludes liberty, whereas liberty is essential to an unlimited and unbounded being. These two positions, whereby we assert the necessity of goodness, and of moral liberty, in the one infinite Being, may seem contradictory to our narrow apprehensions, which cannot conceive them consistent in ourselves; but they are so far from it, when attributed to the infinite, that we see they can be separately demonstrated to be necessary attributes of that Being.

Having thus proved, that there must be an infinite Being, and one only, which raised all beings out of nothing, and bestowed on them their respective natures; another proof of his unity will result from thence, if we consider, that he who makes any thing, must, so far as he is the maker of it, understand and comprehend what he makes; and that it is impossible for any finite nature to comprehend those operations, whereby the forms or essences of things were impressed on their substances, much more how those substances were called forth out of nothing. Yet, impossible as this is to the creature, it must be easy to the Creator; that is, to an infinite mind. We must infer the wisdom of a workman from the greatness and excellence of his work. Such are the works of creation, that we cannot help ascribing infinite wisdom to their author. Now infinity, as we have seen already, cannot be divided, or multiplied; and therefore there can be but one infinite wisdom, or one infinitely wise Being. This Being alone can comprehend any thing; for he alone made every thing. That which in the world seems infinite to us, is finite and comprehensible to him. Matter is, to our apprehensions, infinitely divisible; but he can reckon up the parts into which it may be divided. It is demonstration to us, that space is infinitely extended; but he can assign its measure, and count its points. It is equally plain to our understandings, that duration is eternal; but he can sum its moments, and give the total. And, what is more than all this, the infinite mind can comprehend itself; or to speak more strictly, as comprehension seems to limit the thing comprehended, whereas God cannot be limited, the knowledge of the divine mind is commensurate with the infinity of the divine nature; which is all I mean when I say, the infinite Being can comprehend himself. Now this is so far from being true of any other mind, that no other can comprehend itself, or any thing else, though ever so low in the scale of beings, though ever so obvious in comparison with other things. We conceive of that which we take to be infinite, by negatives only; which is not conceiving it as it is, but as it is not, and confessing we cannot comprehend its real nature, nor define it. The infinite mind only can conceive an infinite, positively, and as it really is in itself; and therefore it is to be styled the infinite of infi-

nities, which is of capacity sufficient to comprehend, and consequently, in the boundless grasp of his ideas, to limit, whatsoever else we call infinite. Now is it not shocking to common sense and reason, to suppose there can possibly be more than one being, of whom all this may be said; that is, more than one real Infinite, one God?

It is from the works of creation only, that we can refute the Atheist, and prove there is a God, against such as deny the truth of all revelation. But could we rationally ascribe the creation to a creature; that is, to a being of limited wisdom and power; this would force us to acknowledge the argument for the being of a God not demonstrative. If the world could have been made by a less than an infinite maker, it could not, of itself, prove there is a God, or an infinite being; and consequently the Deist could never hope to convince the Atheist; for the Deist neither knows of, nor will allow there is, a creature of wisdom and power sufficient to create the world; that is, to raise the systems of created spirits and matter out of nothing. If, without the aid of revelation, the being of God is to be proved from any thing, or all things, that have been made, we must find the work of creation infinitely too great for the agency of a creature, or a limited being. The truth is, we cannot prove the being of an infinite cause any otherwise, than by an effect acknowledged on all hands impossible without an infinite cause. He who denies the work of creation to be such an effect, totally subverts the argument of an infinite cause, and leaves himself without a natural argument for the being of God. To say, that the infinite first cause may enable a creature to create, by communicating infinite wisdom and power to that creature, is the same as to give up the natural argument for the being of a God; for neither reason, nor the light of nature, points out any such creature to us; nay, reason tells us such a communication is impossible. A creature must be limited in all its attributes and powers. God cannot make a new God, another, or a second, infinite. This implies a contradiction. They who say, he can communicate a limited degree of his wisdom and power, and that such degree may be sufficient for the work of creation, do not consider, that the attributes of God can no more be divided, or parcelled out, than he can himself; that they can-

not be limited so as to adapt them to a created nature; and that the wisdom and power of the creature are only analogous to those of the Creator, by no means the same either in kind or degree. Neither do they consider, that a limited wisdom or power are utterly inadequate to the work of creation; and that to insist they are not inadequate, is to destroy the argument for the being of a God, drawn from that work. It is as much the business of a Christian, as of a Deist, to convince the Atheist of error; but that Christian can never convince him, who grants the world might have owed its origen to somewhat less than infinite power and wisdom; for, to refute an Atheist, it is not enough to prove the world was made; we must prove it was made by God, which cannot be otherwise done, than by proving no one else could make it.

I have endeavoured to make this kind of proof for the unity of God as clear and familiar to your apprehensions as possible; and yet you see, there is, notwithstanding, so much subtlety in it, as is sufficient to convince us of the extreme difficulty to be surmounted by us in beating out the the proof, had not the point itself, to be proved, been suggested to us by revelation.

As therefore we have reason amply sufficient for looking on the Scriptures as the dictates of God himself, who can neither deceive, nor be deceived, we shall take what the Scriptures say on this head for unquestionable proofs, since such they must be to every Christian. It would be endless to cite all the concurrent passages for this purpose; and therefore I shall only single out a few, wherein the doctrine is most expressly set forth. 'Is there,' saith the Lord, speaking by Isaiah in the words of my text, 'a God besides me? Yea, there is no God, I know not any. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides me—that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is none else;' Isa. xlv. 5, 6. 'Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel my called, I am he, I am the first, I also am the last;' Isa. xlviii. 12. 'Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God;' Isa. xliv. 6. He lays down his eternity, you see, as an introduction to the belief of his unity. 'He is the first, he

is the last;' and he therefore is the only God. 'Unto thee,' that is, Israel, 'it was shewed,' saith Moses, Deut. iv. 35, 'that thoumightest know that the Lord he is God, there is none else besides him.'

Here you may perceive the unity of God is enforced by his own declarations, conceived in the strongest negatives, to the utter exclusion of all other beings from the idea of God. Accordingly the first commandment, together with numberless other places of Scripture, in negatives also, absolutely forbids the worship of every thing else as God; whether by love, by fear, by prayer, by sacrifice, or any other species of adoration. 'We know' saith St. Paul, 'that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one;' 1 Cor. viii. 4. If now there is but one God, we cannot be at liberty to worship, or pray to any other being. 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,' saith Christ, 'and him only shalt thou serve;' Matt. iv. 10.

In these passages, the first and fundamental article of our faith is fixed, and the sole object of divine worship so restrained, as to leave no subtile or equivocal medium between the adoration of one only eternal God, and gross idolatry. Although we should suppose a creature endued with all the wisdom, goodness, power, and glory, that God himself can bestow on a finite being; and farther still, although we should suppose this creature employed in suffering the greatest misery to procure us the height of happiness; yet, as he is nevertheless but a creature, he must be at an infinite distance from the right object of our worship; and, as he is but the instrument of our happiness, he cannot challenge any degree of that love, wherewith he, who hath made and employs him, ought to be adored.

Who now would imagine, after all that hath been said, or can be said, on this subject, a rational believer in the word of God could once think himself obliged, or barely permitted, to 'worship the creature even as the Creator,' who saith, 'I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another?' Isa. xlii. 8. The word in the original, which is translated by the Lord, is Jehovah; that name whereby he distinguishes himself from all other beings, and which he will no more give, or communicate, to

another, than his glory. And what is this incommunicable glory, which, together with the name, cannot be imparted to any creature? The passage itself shews it to be the honour or glory peculiarly annexed to that name; to wit, divine worship; because he connects the negative, as to his glory, immediately with the declaration of his name; and likewise, because he says in the very same verse, 'neither my praise to graven images.' And why not to graven images, but because they are creatures? and creatures, though of the highest order, being but creatures infinitely beneath him, cannot share the praise, the glory, the worship due only to the infinite eternal Creator.

But here the pretended Christians, who worship creatures, say, both this name and honour may be, and are imparted to creatures. As to the honour, they tell us, it is conferred, in a certain degree, on angels, kings, &c. when they are set forth to us in Scripture, as the substitutes of God, as the representatives of his majesty, and the executors of his authority. For this they cite passages by no means applicable to the purpose, there being nowhere in Scripture a single passage, that prescribes any degree of divine worship as due to an angel, or king. Even the respect we are there allowed or commanded to pay them, is, if we attend to the sense of Scripture, to be terminated in him ultimately and only, in whose name, and by whose authority, they minister to us in spiritual, or bear rule in temporal, concerns. Instances so far fetched, and so disingenuously distorted, are not to be brought in contradiction to passages so directly negative, so peremptorily exclusive, as this, of all creature-worship. And as to what the same worshippers of creatures urge, that this name may be, and was, communicated to creatures, inasmuch as God said to his people, Exod. xxiii. 20, 21, 'Behold, I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way,' &c. 'Beware of him,' &c. 'for my name is in him;' it can by no means serve their turn, till it is first proved, that divine worship is ordered to be paid to this angel, on account of the name that was in him; which cannot possibly be done. The Israelites are only admonished to beware of him; not to worship him. How does it appear, that he takes upon him to speak in his own person,

or to act as any thing more, than the mere servant and substitute of God?

The angel, indeed, who appeared to Moses at the burning bush, and was one of those that 'spoke the law,' Heb. ii. 2, delivers himself in the name, and, as it were, in the person, of Jehovah, who was present also. But if God employed this angel to utter his words, does it follow, that those words were spoken by the angel any otherwise than as the instrument and mouth of God, when it is so evident, that the words neither are, nor can be, the words of any but God himself?

But if the name Jehovah may be given to a creature, then there is no peculiar name, by which God may be distinguished from his creatures, made known to us by either the light of nature, or Scripture. How far this must contribute to throw our study of the Scriptures into confusion, and tempt us to polytheism, let the sober hearer judge. I must say, for my own part, that, as far as my observation on the Scriptures hath led me, no error, no crime, seems to be so carefully guarded against, as that of idolatry; and surely, if we consider either its heinous and pernicious nature, or the unaccountable controversy before us, none could so much need it; for after all the guards and precautions, after all the threatenings and judgments, wherewith the way to it is barred, we see the worshippers of the true God, who call the Scriptures their only rule of faith, have found the way to hedge in the adoration of creatures under the shelter and sanction of those very Scriptures. This cannot but seem astonishing, beyond all measure, to one who is well acquainted with the word of God, and but little used to the obliquity of human reason, and the perversity of the human heart. The first commandment alone, one should imagine, is sufficient to confine our worship to the one infinite Being, and to fill us with the utmost abhorrence to the thoughts of adoring any inferior or subordinate object whatsoever. This commandment is far from being a simple direction for the worship of the true God: besides this, it prohibits absolutely the worship of any other; and is levelled directly against the polytheism of the pagans, who, together with one supreme, adored a variety of subordinate deities. It was no matter what was worshipped with the

Mithres of the Persians, the Baal of the Syrians, the Osiris of the Egyptians, or the Jupiter of the Grecians, who were false gods themselves; but wheresoever the true God is adored, there nothing else is to share the peculiar honours of divinity with him; both because his own awful law forbids it, and because the first, the highest created nature, being infinitely removed from all approaches to a participation of his majesty, hath no more title to a fellowship in his honour, than a worm, or a mite.

Besides, to what end should we pray to a fellow-creature, who, if absent, cannot hear us? who, though present, may want pity, or pitying, may want power to relieve us? For what can a creature do, without the licence or commission of the Creator? And of whom is this to be sought or obtained, even if the things we petition for, were to be conveyed or executed by the intervention of a creature? Surely of him alone, who is present every where, and cannot be ignorant of our requests; who hath goodness proportionable to his knowledge, and power equal to his goodness, to encourage the addresses of all his creatures. As there are no degrees of divinity, so there can be no degrees of divine worship, no prayers offered up, no thanksgivings rendered, but to God alone. If reason and Scripture make any thing, in reference to the object or nature of divine services, plain and indisputable, it must be this. We may therefore safely lay this down as a maxim, that there is but one God, who must be adored by all Christians, as he ought to be loved, with all their hearts, with all their minds, with all their souls, and with all their strength.

Having clearly proved, both from reason and Scripture, that there is one only God, let us now see whether any created being can, consistently with either, be advanced to the name and dignity of God. Such a question ought, I confess, to shock the good sense and piety of every one that hears it; but, since it is actually made a question, and many have the boldness to maintain the affirmative, it is humbly hoped that clergyman, who endeavours to refute an opinion so poisonous and impious, will rather merit the thanks, than the censures, of a truly Christian audience.

Forasmuch as it does not seem to be the opinion of our adversaries, that any creature can possibly be made God, in

the strict and proper sense of the word, I shall not much labour to shew the absurdity of believing, that a finite can be converted into an infinite; or a being, produced in time, be rendered eternal. If I fully prove a subordination of gods, or a delegation of creatures, howsoever conceived or managed, to be that very paganism or polytheism, against which right reason and Scripture do so strongly protest; this, I hope, will be sufficient.

All created natures are, at the will of their creator, capable of multiplication, of more or less, of increase and diminution; and consequently, as to intelligent beings, of subordination. But the infinite nature cannot be imparted, cannot be multiplied, cannot be increased or diminished; and therefore admits not of comparison or subordination. There is no comparison between entity and non-entity; and finite is to infinite, as nothing is to something. The heathen poet therefore spoke very judiciously and honourably of God, when he said, 'What shall I make the subject of my song before the accustomed praises of the Father; who rules the affairs of men and gods, the seas, the earth, and the world, with a variety of seasons or occasions? from whom nothing greater than himself ever sprung; nor is there any thing that may be compared to him, or placed in the second rank after him.'[a] Now, it is not more absurd to say, the nature of God may be imparted to creatures, than to say his power, and other attributes, may be imparted; for in them consists the infinite distinction of his essence, so far as known to us, from all other beings. If then neither his nature, nor attributes, nor essence, can be imparted, we must conclude the same of his peculiar style and name, by which they are signified and discriminated.

Under the name of God, therefore, when properly applied, no idea of subordination can be conveyed, so as to make it the true and proper appellative of any creature. God, it is true, bestows wisdom and power on creatures; but what wisdom and power? Surely not his own infinite wisdom or power, which can neither be divided nor imparted; but a finite, a created wisdom and power, peculiar to the creature. These attributes of the infinite Being are infinite, and admit of no degrees. We do not say of one

[a] Horat. lib. i. ode 12.

who is inspired, or works miracles, that he is infinitely wise, or almighty; but that God uses his audible words to express the divine wisdom, and his fleshly members to execute the divine power. The man is not the agent, but organ. It would be impious to say, such a one is God; but it is only a religious truth to say, he speaks by the wisdom, or acts by the power, of God. Hence it appears, that the name of God cannot, without the grossest impiety, be given to a creature, even when acting in his name, and by his peculiar power.

Much less can it be ascribed to a creature, acting only by the mere power of a creature; for that power is bounded, was created, and therefore cannot be the power of God. If it could, every creature would, in proportion to its share of power, be a god; which would produce infinite degrees of God. This would reduce us to the theology of the Grecians, who peopled heaven with subordinate gods; and of the Egyptians, who stocked the fields, and planted the gardens, with gods. Nay, what is more, this would give us foolish, wicked, weak, and even inanimate, gods; for every thing has some powers, or some degrees of power.

But our adversaries will here distinguish between power and authority, and tell us, that created beings, acting, not by their own power, but by the authority of God, may, as his delegates, be entitled to the name and worship of God; the honour paid to them ultimately terminating in him, whose authority they are clothed with. We shall readily grant, that a bounded respect may be paid to them, and that on account of their Master's majesty. But is this the peculiar honour of God? Is not his honour infinite? theirs finite? How then can the same name and style be given to both; since they are infinitely different in kind and degree? This confounding of ideas, so distinct, under the same term, is not allowed among men, when the difference is not only finite, but minute. It is treasonable to call the governor of a provincial kingdom, the king. When we raise his style the highest, we only call him viceroy. But as the worship of created power, on a supposition that it is part and parcel of the divine power, would lead us to the adoration of onions and garlick; so the worship of deputed authority, on a supposition, that it is derived from the divine appointment,

would run us into the adoration of beadles and constables; for they act by authority from some superior magistrate, he by authority from the king, and he again by authority from God. 'By me kings reign, and princes decree justice;' Prov. viii. 15.

We know power, that is, all power, particularly the civil power, as the psalmist saith, belongeth to the Lord. We are, therefore, bound to respect it wherever we find it; but we are not for that reason to make divinities of those who bear it; nor to honour them with sacrifices, prayers, and adoration. If they faithfully apply it according to his intention, we ought to esteem them for their work's sake. If they do otherwise, we have a right to despise them, even while we obey their power; which shews it is but just to distinguish between the delegate and his office. However, it is but too natural for men to honour the substitute with the respect that is due only to the principal. There is all possible care taken to prevent this human weakness from stopping the devotion of the Israelites, and fixing it in the creatures. They are not only forbidden to fall down before any images or representations of the Divinity; but are also threatened with the severest judgments, in case they should presume to worship his representatives, angels, kings, &c. This was necessary, because their law was ordained by angels, who had frequent intercourse with them, and might by that means, through the superior dignity of their nature, and the superstitious ignorance of those they were sent to, attract too high a degree of respect, as we see in the case of Manoah, Judges xiii. 22, and of John, Rev. xix. 10. Besides, they had reason to think there were certain angels appointed to preside over particular nations, as we see in the tenth of Daniel. To these they might be tempted to pay a part of that worship, which was due to God alone, after the manner of their idolatrous neighbours, who worshipped one supreme, together with other inferior divinities. To prevent this entirely, the first commandment, and innumerable other prohibitions, to the same effect, are scattered throughout the Pentateuch and the prophets, whereby all divine worship is absolutely restrained to the one only God, Jehovah. Hence it is, that he is often distinguished among the neighbouring Gentiles, from all the other gods, sometimes by the name of

the Lord, or Jehovah, and sometimes by the God of Israel. To prevent for ever all distinctions between God and Jehovah, founded on a possible surmise, that the one might be a supreme, and the other only a subordinate, or a national, or a tutelary, God of the Israelites, God is often called the only Jehovah, or Lord; and the Lord, or Jehovah, is still more frequently, and more strongly, called the only God. In these passages, God is called the only Jehovah. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, or Jehovah,' Deut. vi. 4. 'Bless the Lord our God for ever and ever; and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou, art Lord, or Jehovah, alone;' Neh. ix. 5, 6. 'Now, therefore,' saith Hezekiah, Isa. xxxvii. 20, 'O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know, that thou art the Lord, or Jehovah, even thou alone.' From hence it appears evidently, that there is but one Jehovah, and that the one God is that one only Jehovah; so that the expressions which seem to intimate two Jehovahs, being neither directly affirmative nor negative, and admitting easily of another solution, as we shall see hereafter, are to be accommodated to those, which are directly negative, and exclusive of all other Jehovahs, but one. There can be nothing stronger than the terms, wherein the Jehovah is called God alone, or the only God. 'Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know, that the Lord, or Jehovah, he is God; there is none else besides him;' Deut. iv. 35. 'Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord, or Jehovah, he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else;' Deut. iv. 39. 'Thou art great, O Lord (Jehovah) God; for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee;' 2 Sam. vii. 22. 'Who is God, save the Lord, or Jehovah?' 2 Sam. xxii. 32. Solomon prays, that God would maintain his and the people's cause, 'that all the people of the earth may know, that the Lord, or Jehovah, is God, and that there is none else;' 1 Kings viii. 60. When all the people saw the fire falling from heaven on the sacrifice of Elijah, 'they fell on their faces, and said, 'The Lord, or Jehovah, he is the God; the Lord he is the God;' that is, God himself, or the only God; 1 Kings xviii. 39. 'O Lord,' or Jehovah, 'there is none like thee, neither is there any God

besides thee;' 1 Chron. xvii. 20. 'Thou art great, and dost wondrous things: thou art God alone; teach me thy way, O Lord' (Jehovah); Psal. lxxxvi. 10, 11. 'Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, or Jehovah, that I am God. Yea, before the day was, I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?' Isa. xliii. 12, 13. 'I am the Lord (Jehovah), and there is none else, there is no God besides me;' Isa. xlv. 5. I might give other passages to shew, that Jehovah is God alone, whereby it is as fully proved, that there is no other God at all but one, and that the Jehovah is that very God, as the authority, from whence they may be brought, can prove any thing. But why should I multiply proofs, if these are insufficient? If the prophets, speaking by the Spirit of God; if God himself on repeated assurances, such as these, cannot convince us, that there is no Lord, or Jehovah, but God; nor any God, but Jehovah; if they cannot, in short, satisfy us, that God and Jehovah are precisely the same Being, and that neither name can, without a blasphemous contradiction to God's own reiterated asseverations, be given to any other; it is in vain to talk of arguing from Scripture. What now must they do, who have maintained, that the one eternal God, and Jehovah, are different, infinitely different beings; and that the one is but the creature and substitute of the other? They cannot surely any longer defend their Arianism or polytheism, on this hypothesis; and therefore must mine for another. Accordingly they do, endeavouring to pick a wretched subterfuge for their paganism out of the word 'worship,' and those terms in the original languages, for which it is put. They say, worship, respect, reverence, dependence, &c. admit of different degrees, and are prescribed in Scripture, to be paid not only to the supreme God, but also to superior creatures. We grant it; but do not the words imply an infinitely different meaning, when set for the service we are commanded to pay to the one only God, and when set for that respect we are ordered to shew to fellow-creatures, who are placed over us? Besides, are there not acts of devotion, with their proper terms, such as sacrifice, and prayer, mental, as well as vocal, which sufficiently distinguish the worship to be paid to the one God? The practice immediately following on the promulgation of any

law hath always been esteemed the best interpretation of that law. Now, did the Jews, while they irreproveably adhered to the law of God, ever conceive themselves to have more than one object of their worship or devotion? Did they ever think themselves at liberty to pray and sacrifice to two or more gods; the first infinite and supreme, the rest created and subordinate? Were the law and prophets more expressly against so heathenish a practice, than the constant faith and worship of God's people, while they continued truly such? Or have we any other object of worship, than the ancient Israelities had? No; our blessed Saviour, referring to Deuteronomy vi. 13, and x. 20, saith, 'It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God; and him only shalt thou serve.' In thus quoting the law, he centres all our worship in the same object with that of the Israelites; and what that object is, we may hear from the same authority in the same passage, 'The Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible.' This was the God of the Israelites; this is our God. Is there now a greater God than this? Is there a God over this God of gods? Is there a Lord over this Lord of lords? Is he but a national or subordinate God? And as to the worship we are to pay him, that we may have no more chicaning on words, it is fixed sufficiently by the context to this expression of our Saviour. The devil had offered him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, on condition he would fall down and worship him. Here our Saviour's answer must be wholly impertinent, if the meaning of the word 'worship,' both in his reply, and in the offer of the tempter, is not exactly the same. Now, that this was the worship peculiar to the true God only, is plain from the words of our Saviour, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' The expression of falling down, in the act of adoration, farther serves to determine and illustrate the sense of the word under dispute. If then the Israelites were, and consequently we Christians are, to worship Jehovah, or the Lord God, only, it follows, that he must be the one only true God; or that, if he is but an inferior god, we are hereby forbidden to worship the superior or most high God; or at least it follows, that the term 'worship,' in these words of Christ, must signify, contrary to the

manifest purport of his argument, not the worship due to the only adorable God, but such a worship as may be paid to creatures, as well as him. Is it not the one only, supreme, eternal, God, whom alone we are, in this passage, commanded to worship, whom alone we are commanded to serve? If it is, are we at liberty to worship any other being under the notion of a created or delegated god?

That there is but one only God, and that no other is admitted to a participation of his name, or to any subordination of his divinity, in any sense or measure, under him, or in fellowship with him, these words of Jehovah, were there nothing else, would be sufficient to convince me; 'I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me;' Deut. xxxii. 39. How you may judge in this matter, I know not; but it is to me as manifest as the light, that the all-foreseeing God intended, by what I have cited from his word, to prevent all distinctions between the eternal God and Jehovah, that there might not be the least room left for supposing the God of Israel was an inferior, or subordinate, god.

All the expedients, to which our adversaries have recourse, in order to evade the strength of this, and the like reasoning, miserably fail them. They can erect no new god by adoption, by generation, by creation, no more than by delegation. God can adopt only creatures; and creatures can never be converted into gods; the finite can never be made infinite. And as to generation, it is either proper, or improper. By generation, properly so called, it is impossible a creature should become God. Every thing begets its like or another thing of the same nature with itself. God therefore, by proper generation, cannot generate a creature. The act of this production admits of no other term, but that of creation. Much less can he, by the improper or metaphorical generation, ascribed to him in Scripture, where it is also called regeneration and adoption, raise up a new infinite, or God.

These things being laid down as self-evident or demonstrable truths, can we suppose the God of truth would, in any case, or for any purpose, deceive us into the adoration of creatures, under the pretence of loving, praying to them, and trusting in them, not as creatures, but as the deputies of God? Would he thus debase his own majesty, and

alienate our dependence from himself to our fellow-creatures? Would he thrust in the creature between himself and his servants, to stop the passage of our love and duty towards the source of being, of bounty and mercy? Does this Sun of the intellectual world raise up clouds to obstruct the rays of his own glory, and darken the eyes of his worshippers, whose love he woos by infinite obligations, whose adoration he calls up to, and centres in, himself, by all the convenience, the beauty, and magnificence, of the creation, and by the whole tenor of true religion? He, who can thus think of him, knows him not. He, who knows him, finds his imagination swallowed up in the sense of his infinity, his love engrossed by his boundless goodness, and his whole soul, with all his affections, faculties, and powers, so attached to him, that he hath little attention, not to say adoration, left for his fellow-creatures, howsoever dignified by the bounty of his Creator. We cannot pay our adoration to any being, but him, if we receive the first commandment as a rule of our duty, or the first article of the creed as a rule of our faith; especially if we consider, that, in respect to our worshipping any thing else, he is called in the second commandment, in Joshua xxiv. and in Nahum i. 'A jealous God; the Lord who revengeth; the Lord who revengeth and is furious; the Lord who will take vengeance on his adversaries;' which adversaries we shall find to be the worshippers of other gods, if we cast our eyes over the chapter to verse 14. It is in pursuance of the same metaphor of jealousy, that the Israelites, whom he had espoused by covenant for a peculiar people, are said by the prophets, on account of their revolting to the service of other gods, to be adulterers, and to have 'gone a whoring after their own inventions.'

If we are not so much as to 'make mention of the names of other gods, nor to let it be heard out of our mouths;' Exod. xxiii. 13; if a Gentile could so truly say, 2 Kings v. 15, on being miraculously cured of a leprosy, 'Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel;' if God himself hath said, 2 Kings xvii. 35, 'Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice unto them;' if he says by Isaiah xlv. 22, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else;' if the same is inculcated

in innumerable other passages of Scripture; if it is inculcated with the most glorious promises to the worshippers of the only true God, and with the most dreadful denunciations against the worshippers of other gods; how shall we call the Scriptures the word of God, and at the same time allow ourselves the most distant thought of adoring any thing but him?

But here, say the adversaries, these very Scriptures make frequent mention of other gods, without condemning them as false gods, but rather with marks of veneration; as Exod. xxii. 28, 'Thou shalt not revile the gods.' Deut. x. 17, 'The Lord your God, is God of gods.' 1 Sam. xxviii. 13, 'I saw gods ascending out of the earth.' 1 Cor. viii. 5, 'There be gods many,' &c. What then shall we say? Do the Scriptures contradict themselves? God forbid. For Elohim, the word in the original, which we translate by gods, Exod. xxii. 28, the Targum of Onkelos, the Syriac and Arabic versions, put judges; and so indeed it ought to be interpreted in this and the like places. When it is applied to God, it signifies the most powerful or sovereign Lord. Here it is to be remarked, as it is by Plato and Damascene, that God, being incomprehensible, is not properly to be named; for names cannot intimate his nature, as they do the natures of other things. It often happens, therefore, that, in speaking of God, we are forced to use such terms as are applied to inferior beings. Hence it is that we call him Elohim, the Judge, or potentate; El, the powerful God; and to distinguish him from inferior Elohim, El Elion, the most high God, Gen. xiv. 20; El Gibbor, the most mighty God; Zeph. iii. 17; El Elim, the Potentate of potentates, Dan. xi. 36. In the same manner he is called Adonai, or the Lord. These are but titles or epithets, borrowed from things below, to denote the attributes of God; and therefore it is no wonder, that they are sometimes applied to inferior beings. However, it is easy to see by their adjuncts, that they bear an infinitely different sense when applied to God and his creatures. They no more make gods of them, than they can make a creature of him. But, besides these, he hath his more proper names, which by their peculiar sense and application, simply intimate him alone, with the addition of negatives, strongly expressing his unity. Such are Shaddai, the All-sufficient; Ehjeh, I shall be; Jah, the essential Lord;

and Jehovah, the Being, or he which is, which was, and which is to come. God, it is true, is called, Deut. x. 17, 'The God of gods;' but is it not to intimate his excellence, rather than their divinity? In the same sense it is said, Psal. xcvii. 7, 'Worship him, all ye gods,' where the psalmist says in the same verse, 'Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves in idols;' and then commands these very gods, or angels, as St. Paul calls them, 'to worship the true God.' As to the passage, 1 Sam. xxviii. 13, we have there only the word of a witch, struck into almost a frenzy of fear on the sight of an unexpected vision, and the discovery of a king, who had made her practices death by a decree, that she saw any gods. And after all, it appears by the place, that what she took for Samuel afterward, was one of her gods. And concerning the words of St. Paul, 1 Cor. viii. 5, the meanest reader may see he speaks by way of irony and derision; for he says in the foregoing verse, 'There is no other God but one;' and in the following verse, 'To us there is but one God;' guarding his irony with a strong negative on each hand of it. This text, so often cited by the tritheists to prove there are more gods than one, or that there are subordinate gods, serves sufficiently to explain those passages of the Old Testament where the same appellations are sometimes given both to God and creatures, and to restrain our faith and worship to the only true God; for it is expressly asserted, 'that there is none other God but one;' and that doctrine urged home upon us by a direct application of it to our minds and consciences, 'To us there is but one God.' Now, if we are really Christians, and do believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, is not this single passage, wherein the Holy Spirit, speaking of these supposed inferior gods, denies their being gods, and forbids their worship as such, sufficient to end for ever all doubts and debates about the unity of God, or the object of divine worship? This passage tells us, there is but one God, and that the one only God is our only God. God himself awfully inculcates the same doctrine, Isa. xlv. 21—23; 'Who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord [Jehovah]? And there is no God [Elohim] else besides me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none besides me. Look unto me and

be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else, I have sworn by myself, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.' Here we see, the only Jehovah denies the being of any other Elohim, or gods, but himself; and, as a necessary consequence, bids all men 'look unto,' or 'be converted' to him, that they may be saved, solemnly swearing by himself, that every knee shall bow to, and every tongue swear by, him; that is, that all shall worship him alone, because he alone is God; and consequently there is none other, whom we may bow to, swear by, or adore. Hath God declared, there is no other God besides him? and shall man dare to say, there are other gods? Shall God, by an oath, confine all divine worship to himself, and man impiously take occasion from his own word to worship other gods along with him, on a pretence, that he hath ordered them to be honoured with the name and worship of God, when no such order can be found? If it could, God must have given contradictory orders, and left it undetermined which we should obey, than which a more blasphemous supposition can hardly be conceived. Our Saviour's words, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,' are sufficient, once for all, to determine the unity both of God, and our worship. Hence it appears, that the sophisticated arguments, founded on such expressions as these, 'There are gods many; worship him, all ye gods; I have said, ye are gods,' &c. have nothing in them of any consequence to the dispute about the unity of God. But farther still, to put this matter about the unity of God, both as God, and as the sole object of our worship, beyond all possibility of debate hereafter among the thinking and ingenuous part of the world, it must be observed, that the plural acceptation of the word Elohim, is the very thing that hath given a handle to the tritheists to insist on a plurality of gods. Let it be farther observed, that whatsoever this word may do to favour the belief of a personal distinction in God, it can never be rationally brought to prove there are more gods than one, or more objects of our worship than that one, since in the first commandment, where the unity of God, as God, and as the sole object of our worship, is fixed, both scientifically and practically fixed, by precise and negative terms, which must be taken uni-

versally, and in their full unlimited sense, the word Elohim is that which stands for God, or the only Divine Being, or the only being to be worshipped. The true sense of the commandment therefore is this; 'Whatsoever other beings the nations round you may worship, or whatsoever beings the word Elohim may elsewhere in my word be applied to; Thou Israelite, shalt have, shalt serve, shalt worship, by prayer, sacrifice, love, fear, or dependence, no other Elohim, or gods, but me, or with me, or in my sight; for I am the God that appeared to Moses at the bush; I am the God that brought you out of the land of Egypt; I am the God of your father Abraham; I am the God that created all things out of nothing; I am the God, who, equally incapable of being deceived, and of deceiving, do assure you, that I am your Elohim, or God; and there is none else, no other Elohim, besides me, Deut. iv. 35; that I [Jehovah] am Elohim in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, and there is no other Elohim, or God, but me, Deut. iv. 39; that there is not any Elohim, or God, besides me; 2 Sam. vii. 22. Of this also I farther assure you, and all men, in all times and places; 1 Kings viii. 60. xviii. 39; 1 Chron. xvii. 20; Psal. lxxxvi; 10, 11. Isa. xlv. 5; and in many other passages of that word which I dictate by the mouths of my holy prophets.' Here the true, the only God so clearly tells us, there is no other God but him, and that we are to worship no other God but him, by the very word laid hold of to prove there are more gods, that it looks like a sort of impiety in us to attempt the proof of either point, after what he hath said. What then must it be in the adversaires to say, there are other gods, and we may, nay, ought to worship other gods?

It would indeed be a shame to take notice of cavils founded on passages of Scripture so miserably wrested, were it not a sin to lay them before the feet of the ignorant and unwary; and were we not commanded, on some occasions, 'to answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.' The gods, mentioned in these mistaken passages, are no other than such as the vine in the fable, Judges ix. 13, 'boasts of cheering;' or than they of whom the psalmist speaks, Psal. lxxxii. 6, 7, 'I have said, Ye are gods —but ye shall die like men.' But where are the attributes or worship of God prescribed to be paid to these gods, when

mentioned in the most favourable sense? Or rather, in what book of holy Scripture are not the first peremptorily denied them, and the second absolutely forbidden them?

You see now clearly, by what hath been said, both from reason and Scripture, that there is precisely but one God, and consequently but one object of divine worship; that we must be pagans and polytheists, if we admit any gods besides him; and that we are guilty of idolatry the moment we pray to, or worship any other being whatsoever.

It is easy to conclude, from this double demonstration, what ought to be the practice of you who worship the true God only. You are not so much as to listen to the subtle follies of such as would persuade you to admit other objects of worship, although ever so elevated in nature, and subordinate in office. Let those two sects, who have been the disgrace of Christianity, so opposite in all other things, agree with each other, and with the pagans, in deifying creatures, either by calling them gods, or by impiously praying to them, and putting their trust in them, while they refuse them the name of gods; but let your good sense and piety be shewn in this, that you worship the true God alone 'in spirit and in truth. What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou shouldst fear the Lord thy God, and serve him with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind?' God will not accept of thee, nor canst thou live the life of a true Christian, if 'thine heart is divided,' as Hosea expresses it, between the true God and the false. The Samaritans were not reckoned to the people of God, because 'while they feared the Lord, they served their own gods;' 2 Kings xvii. 33. Consider what God denounces against those, 'who worship, and swear by the Lord, and yet swear by Malcham;' Zeph. i. 5. 'Why should you halt between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; if another, follow him;' 1 Kings xviii. 21. 'If you do return unto the Lord your God with all your heart, then put away the strange gods;' 1 Sam. vii. 3. Let Dagon fall before the ark of God; for the same heart cannot be a temple to both. 'You cannot serve two masters.' Well might the son of Sirach say, 'Woe be to the sinner that goeth two ways;' for he must of necessity miss his end in both. The temple of

the true God, and that of the false, stand directly opposite to each other, so that there is no going to both at once.

But, if you choose the service of the one only living God, it is your business rightly to prepare yourself for that service, that it may be fit for you, as a rational creature, to offer, and for him, as a God of infinite holiness and majesty, to receive. In order to this, first endeavour to know him in his word and works, that you may make a right judgment of the service he requires. And when you do know him, then labour to be like him in justice, in mercy, in purity, and holiness; so shall you recover his image, which sin had defaced in you, and mutual affection shall flow from this happy conformity of natures. Then weigh in a just balance all those objects of sense, appetite, and passion, that have hitherto estranged your affections; and you will quickly find them nothing, if God is in the other scale. All created things have this of meanness and littleness in them, that they are never great, and this of deformity, that they are never beautiful, but by comparison with somewhat that is less significant, or less excellent. They are beholden for their grandeur to that which is little; and for their beauty, to that which is ugly. The infinite Being only is great, is lovely, in himself, and without comparison.

What is it then withholds your heart from God? Things that are as nothing, from the immense, the infinite Being? Things that are foul and vile, from the beautiful, the glorious God? Things that are deceitful and pernicious, from him who is full of truth and goodness; from him 'to whom salvation belongeth;' and who would make you for ever happy, if you could but see that the infinite is greater than the finite? How amazing is it, that this should be difficult to you, who can distinguish between the magnitude of a world, and of a grain of sand, wherein the difference is so minute! Have you reason only for small things, have you judgment and discernment only for little differences; and none for that which is immense?

But if you really do know God, and are rightly apprized of the infinite difference between him and all things else, let not this knowledge, which ought, above all other sorts of knowledge, to be practical, confine itself in your understand-

ing only. Know him with your heart, give him your affections as well as your reason; for now that God is master of your judgment, it would be very absurd in you to let any thing else have your love. Such a division of yourself between things above, and things on the earth, would carry you to opposite ends; the one would rivet you to the earth, the other would exalt you to heaven. Since both cannot be done, is it not best to follow reason, and cleave to God? If you choose this upper path, break loose from the world, the deceitful world, and fly to God, the author of your being, and the source of all good. Learn to fear him in his power and justice; learn to admire him in his wisdom, his majesty, his immensity: learn to love him for his bounty, his goodness, his mercy; and then adore him with the united force of all these happy affections and sensations. As he is one, endeavour to worship and serve him with an undivided heart. Let your faith honour him, your works serve him, your tongue bless and praise him.

If you come thus affected and disposed before him, you will not come poor nor empty-handed. Your heart, fear not, will be a more acceptable sacrifice than thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil. But take care that faith purge it, that repentance cut it in sunder, and that piety prepare and lay it on the altar. There let it burn in the flames of hallowed love; and God will receive it as a sweet-smelling savour, as an offering more precious than ten thousand worlds.

Before you are satisfied of God's unity, and other attributes, all your disputes and inquiries about him are in themselves speculative. But conviction hath no sooner put an end to these speculations, than you ought seriously to consider, for what purpose you made this most important point the subject of your examination. It was not merely an effect of curiosity; it was not surely that you might talk better, and parade it with more appearance of knowledge, in this religious fundamental, than other men. If vanity must be indulged, hath it not a lower field of shells, pebbles, and butterflies, to expatiate in? God, I must insist, is too sacred, too awful, a subject for curious speculations, and a conceited ostentation of knowledge. It was, it must have been, with nobler views, that you sought for satisfaction in

so weighty a matter. It was, no doubt, with an earnest desire to know who it is that gave you being, and all the comforts of that being, that you might love him, and by your services attach his love to you. This was a wise end, and well becoming the faculties God hath bestowed on you. But if you have at length attained to it, your wisdom can now no otherwise be justified, but by reducing this attainment to practice; that you may feel in your own heart the conscious pleasures arising from a life spent in the love and fear of God; and that all who know you 'may see your light;' and being edified by it, 'may glorify your Father which is in heaven.'

May God of his infinite goodness, so enlighten your mind, and so work on your heart, as to produce this happy effect, through Christ Jesus our Saviour. Amen.

DISCOURSE V.

OBJECTIONS TO THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST ANSWERED.

ST. JOHN v. 22, 23.

The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.

HAVING, in the former Discourse, proved, that there is but one God, I intend, with his assistance, to prove in this, and the following, that Jesus Christ is that only one God. In this, I shall endeavour to remove the most material objections to his divinity, wherewith its opposers arm themselves from holy Scripture, that, in the next, the proofs thereof drawn from thence, being freed from these obstructions, may come with their full force.

The Son, or Christ, as my text assures us, is to judge the whole moral world at the last day. Now, none but the all-knowing Being, 'who searcheth the heart,' is able to judge the actions, the words, the very thoughts, of all intel-

ligent creatures. None but he, 'whose judgments are true and righteous altogether, whose righteousness is like the great mountains, and whose judgments are a great deep,' is qualified to perform this work of justice, on which depend so necessarily the virtue and goodness both of angels and men. None but the Almighty hath power sufficient to decide the fate, and fix the eternal rewards or punishments, of all God's accountable creatures. None, therefore, but the Divine Being, is fit to execute this high commission. 'Doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth;' for no other is able to do it.

Let it not offend the ears of one who believes in the unity of God, that he should receive a commission; since we acknowledge, that he, to whom this trust is committed, receives the authority, whereby he acts as our judge, from the appointment of the Father, as he does also his essence from the eternal generation; the Father being the fountain of the Godhead, and therefore of the divine authority; and since we likewise acknowledge, that the judge is man as well as God. Whatsoever reference this commission may have to his previous nature, it is declaratively founded on that which he assumed in the womb of the blessed virgin; for, at ver. 17, he expressly assigns this as the reason of that commission, asserting, that 'the Father hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man.' By thus affixing the idea of his delegation to his human nature, he seems to have pointed out this passage as a key to all other expressions of the like import. He is sent, he is commissioned, he is commanded, to do, not his own will, but the will of his Father, because he is a Son; peculiarly, indeed, because he is the Son of man.

As he is commissioned to judge, so, in the same manner, was he commissioned to preach, and work miracles. He, being man, had a distinct will of his own; it was, however, not that will, but the will of his Father, which he was appointed to execute in all he did: neither was it his human wisdom, by which he taught the world; nor his human power by which he wrought his works; but the divine wisdom and power communicated to him by his Father along with his essence. Therefore, he saith, 'I (as a man) can of myself do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because

I seek not my own will, but the will of my Father which hath sent me;' John v. 30. 'The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doth;' ver. 20. 'I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak;' chap. xii. 49. 'The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the works;' chap. xiv. 10. In all this, it is evident he speaks as the Son of man; for the Father, he tells us, 'gave him authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of man.' As such, he proves his mission by miracles: as such, he gives us a law, and a covenant: and, as such, he will judge us at the last day by that law and covenant. All these privileges and powers accrue to him as the Son of man; because by his blood, as such, he bought us; and acquired a right to rule over us, and judge us; to the execution, however, of which high office, the divine wisdom and power are absolutely necessary.

But you ought to observe for what end and purpose the Father hath thus committed all judgment to the Son. You see, it is, 'that all men may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;' and you heard, in the former Discourse, the express declaration of God by Isaiah, that 'he would not give his glory, or honour to another,' that is, to any but himself. As sure, therefore, as the word of God is true, so surely is Christ that God, and no other; for the honour here appointed to be given is, both in degree and kind, that very honour which is due to the Father, which is due to God alone, and which God will neither give himself, nor suffer to be given by us, to any but God. And good reason there is why we should be ordered to do this, since 'all the angels of God are commanded to worship Christ;' Heb. i. 6; and since, in the presence of his Father, 'the whole host of heaven, together with every other creature,' ascribe this glory to him, as to the Father, 'saying, with a loud voice, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever;' Rev. v. 11—13.

Now, though this power and glory are given to Christ the Son of man, as a purchase made by his precious blood; yet, since the power and glory are divine, they could not have have been given unto him, were he not truly and properly a

divine person; because 'they cannot be given to another;' and because the Scripture every where restrains them to God alone.

Accordingly, our blessed Saviour speaks of himself as possessed of that glory, not only before he became man, but before the creation of the world. 'Now, O Father, glorify me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was;' John xvii. 5. To this glory Christ, as God, was entitled from all eternity; but did not acquire a right to it as man, till he had paid the purchase by his blood.

If, in holy Scripture, there are other expressions that intimate some inferiority in the Son, it is not to be wondered at; since it is plain this must be accounted for, as it very easily and rationally may, by the human nature of the Son, whereof I have given a sample sufficient to guide us in all such cases; and by the economy or distribution of offices, whereby the three Divine Persons are distinguished, in the word of God, as concurring respectively to the scheme of our redemption. There are several passages of Scripture, indeed, that seem to intimate the obedience and subjection of the Son to the Father, as prior to the assumption of the human nature. But these may also be naturally interpreted with an eye to that assumption; or, allowing they may not, they are proper to the relation between father and son; and may be so understood, without the least necessity for supposing an inequality of nature between the Divine Father and Son, any more than between a human father and his son, where we know there is none. In the Divine nature, which is one, and simple, there can be no degrees. Now the equality, or rather identity, of Christ with the Father, and his subjection to him, are both revealed to us in holy Scripture; and therefore it lies on those professors of Christianity who deny, as much as on us who maintain, the true and proper divinity of Christ, to reconcile this seeming opposition. The former attempt it by sinking the sense of such passages as speak for his divinity, to the standard of such as intimate a lower character of him. We, on the contrary, do not endeavour to raise the sense of those Scriptures which convey the lowest notions of him, in order to bring them up to the level of those that speak highest; but interpret them, either

of that honour which every son owes to his father, though of the same nature, and consequently of equal dignity as to nature; or of the economy of offices, one superior to another, already mentioned; or of the Son's humanity. Whether of the two do most justice to the sense of Scripture, may possibly appear in this and some following Discourses.

If Christ, in one place, John xiv. 28, says, 'My Father is greater than I,' he must be understood of his relation to the Father as his Son, born of a woman; because he says in the same verse, 'I go unto my Father, I go away, and come again unto you,' speaking of his bodily ascension, and of his bodily return at the end of the world. Accordingly, after his resurrection, being now about to ascend into heaven in the fulness of his human nature, he saith, 'I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God;' John xx. 17. Now, this migration from and to his church on earth can be understood only of his human nature, wherein he was ready to ascend or depart; for, in respect to his superior nature, he was never to depart from that church, which was then united to him as his spiritual body, and to which he said, speaking of futurity in the present tense, 'Lo, I am with you alway unto the end of the world;' Matt. xxviii. 20. When, therefore, Christ saith, 'My Father is greater than I,' he speaks of himself, no doubt, as a man. As such, he calls the Father his God in the passage now cited; and when he hung on the cross, where it is as certain the human nature of Christ spoke, as that it suffered. As he applies the twenty-second Psalm to himself by these words, taken from thence, and repeated at the approach of death, we see the royal prophet must have furnished that exclamation for him in the character of a man; and therefore ought to be understood as speaking to him in the same character, when he saith, Psal. xlv. 7, quoted by St. Paul, Heb. i. 9, 'God, thy God, hath anointed thee.' But this did not hinder either the psalmist or the apostle, from addressing him in the verse immediately preceding, under an infinitely higher character; for they say to him, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.' And here it is worth observing, that the word God, applied to Christ in the sixth verse, and to the Father immediately after in the seventh, is the very same, namely, Elohim. And did the psalmist, who

spoke of the Father and the Son in the same passage, and by the same name of God, intend, without in the least hinting it to us, that the Father and the Son were two distinct gods, the one infinitely less than, and inferior to, the other? From these observations it appears, I think, sufficiently plain, that, when Christ saith, 'My Father is greater than I,' and prays to him by the title of his God, he cannot possibly be understood as speaking in reference to his prior or superior nature, but only of that which he had in common with the rest of men. If the Father is, in respect to Christ's higher nature, greater than him, how came Christ to say, John xiv. 9, 'He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father;' and, ver. 10, 'I am in the Father, and the Father in me?' How came he to say, 'I and my Father are one Being?' chap. x. 30. Or how came the Holy Spirit, speaking by St. Paul, to say, Phil. ii. 6, 'Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God.'

The opposers of Christ's divinity, I know, explain both these passages in a different sense. As to the first, they say, 'Christ is one with the Father, as his disciples are one with him,' John xvii. 22; that is, they are joined together by love and charity. The Jews, to whom our Saviour spoke the words, John x. 31, did not so understand them; for they charged him with having thereby made himself God; and he, by his reasonings and assertions afterward, only confirms them in the same opinion of his meaning. This is manifest from their attempting to seize his person, which put an end to the interview between him and them. But, granting that Christ is no otherwise one with the Father than his disciples are with him, it will not relieve the Arians from the conclusion I have drawn, because Christ and his disciples were of one and the same nature, and formed one body; and all we contend for is, that he was as truly of one nature with the Father, as they were with him. And as to the passage in the epistle to the Philippians, where it is said, that 'Christ, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,' the construction put on it by our adversaries is so forced, and so disingenuous, that it scarcely deserves a serious notice. They will have the original word for form to signify only image, or similitude; whereas every one skilled in the Greek knows it implies rather an internal, inherent

form, or the essence of any thing. 'Thought it not robbery' is a most close and faithful translation; yet they would translate the words, 'was not in haste to take to himself, and boast;' whereof it is difficult to determine whether the folly or the impudence is greatest. 'Equal to God' is also the most exact translation our language will bear, and perfectly expresses the sense. But they will have the words mean only 'like God;' that is, they will have the word of God speak a meaning quite foreign to the common, known acceptation of the terms, purely that it may accommodate itself to their prepossessions. But the use of the word *morphe*, 'form,' in this passage, may serve to decide the merits in respect to the construction of the whole; for the same word is used when Christ is said to be in the form of God, and when he is said to be in the form of a servant, and therefore must be taken precisely in the same sense on both occasions. Now, we know he was really a servant, and not merely in the likeness of a servant; and so he is expressly called, Matt. xii. 18, and Isa. xlii. 1. It follows, therefore, that he was as truly God before, as he was a servant after, he took on him the nature of man, that is, of a servant; for all men are, by nature, truly and properly the servants of God.

Although in many places the Father is said to 'have sent the Son,' and, in my text, to have 'committed all judgment to the Son;' which expressions, we own, imply authority on the one side, and subjection on the other; yet no inequality of nature, previous to the incarnation of Christ, can be concluded from thence, without doing violence to the many other passages wherein the Godhead of the Son, and his equality with the Father, are peremptorily inculcated. Such expressions as these intimated, from whence the Arians would infer the inferiority of the Son, relate not, by any means, to his nature, but his office, as is made evident by the marks of paternal authority wherewith they are stamped.

The most remarkable of these are such as style the Son an angel. Well may Christ be so called, since he is the Angel, or Messenger, of the covenant, Mal. iii. 4. But what are we to understand by the word angel? Is it the designation of a particular nature, or only of an office? No doubt, of an office only; for the original word *malach*, neither by its etymology, being derived from an Hebrew word which signi-

fies 'function,' nor in its use or application, being given promiscuously to Christ, superior creatures, men, and devils, imports any thing of the nature of him to whom it is applied in Scripture, excepting Heb. ii. 16, where the word 'nature' is joined with it in our translation; and in two or three other places, no way relative to Christ, or the present controversy. As the several orders of creatures above us are all of them 'ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation,' and to execute the other good purposes of God throughout the world, they are styled angels, which is not a name, but a title; and so are the apostles, so are the bishops of the seven Asiatic churches, and that with equal propriety. When this title is applied to Christ, it only intimates, that he is the messenger of his Father, but gives us not the smallest hint concerning his nature. It is true, he is called an angel: and is he not also called Adam and David? Not, surely, because he was that first man from whom all others descend; or that other, who was the immediate son of Jesse; but because he was, by office, the father of the regenerate, and the royal shepherd of God's people. That he hath nothing of the same nature with those beings who are, by way of eminence, commonly called angels, is manifest from Heb. ii. 16, 'Verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.' The translation here departs from the original word, in order more clearly to give the sense in English. The close literal translation is placed on the margin of our Bible, and is, 'He took not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he took hold.' He took hold of the nature, or species of being, which he intended to save, which was not that of angels; but he who would know what nature or species he did take hold of, when he took the seed of Abraham, may in the fourteenth verse of this chapter plainly see it, where it is said, 'Forasmuch as the children,' which God had given him, that is Christ, 'are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself,' that is, Christ, 'likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death; wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.' Here the 'seed of Abraham,' and 'flesh and blood,' are opposed to the nature of angels, which Christ certainly did not assume, lay hold of, or take.

Is it not then most evident, that he had, first, a distinct nature of his own, and that he afterward took on him another, but not of angels; by which is meant, in this passage, all those superior creatures whom we call by that appellation? And what was that first nature which he had before he had assumed the second? It could not be the nature either of angels or men, because it is here clearly distinguished from both. Neither could it have been any nature inferior to that of man; because, if it had, it could not have been said with truth, that he was 'in the form of God' before his incarnation; nor that 'he emptied and humbled himself' in order thereunto, Phil. ii. 6—8. It follows, therefore, that his first nature was no other than the Divine; and that he was so far from being an angel by nature, and bearing only the name and style of God, that he was really God by nature, and bore only the style of an angel; for he neither had originally, nor took on him, the nature of angels.

Our adversaries may here perhaps object, that the word angels, in this passage, is to be understood of the lowest order of spirits superior to us, as if they were peculiarly so called; but that, notwithstanding, Christ may have been one of those principalities, powers, thrones, &c. who are represented to us as higher than angels; and, having first this superior nature, it was proper enough to say, he took not on him the nature of those inferior spirits, called angels; but, being by his first nature much higher than them, he became a little lower by the assumption of the second.

But these objectors would do well to consider, that the word angel, or angels, in Scripture language, infinitely oftener comprehends all the orders of created spirits superior to us (they being, by office, all equally the angels or messengers of God), than it signifies, in a restrained sense, the lowest order of such spirits; that, in this text to the Hebrews, it probably comprehends them all, because it is brought in contrast to the nature of man; and Christ, in the same passage, is called God, and all the angels of God are ordered to worship him; and, above all, that although we do take it here in the restrained sense, it will give the Arians no advantage, because, to serve their purpose, they must understand it, not of an office, but a nature, as they do in those passages where he is called an angel; whereas it is here expressly de-

nied, that he ever had the nature of angels. As the whole force of their argument, drawn from his being called an angel, to prove him but a creature, is founded on the supposition of his being, not by office, but by nature, an angel; we see it is expressly refuted by holy Scripture, and proved to be one of those fallacious arguments, which take the middle term in two different senses in the premises, and whereof one of the premises is the thing to be proved, as may be seen by reducing it to a syllogism, 'All angels are creatures; Christ is an angel; therefore,' &c. The first of these propositions we deny; and observe, that angel, in the first, is made to imply a certain nature; whereas, in the last, the express word of God will not suffer it to signify any thing else but an office; for Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but the office. Besides, in the first, angels signify all the orders of spirits superior to man; whereas, in the latter, angel signifies not what the attempted answer to my argument takes it for, and St. Paul expressly denies, but a higher order of creatures, which that answer must understand by it, or it can be no answer at all.

When Christ is spoken of under the lowest characters, as being 'made, growing in wisdom and stature, weeping, hungering, dying,' and the like; his being born of a woman, whereby every thing that can be said of a man, may be truly and properly said of him, the committal of 'sin only excepted,' lets us clearly into the reason of such expressions. He had in him both an uncreated and a created nature; and, therefore we are not to wonder, that he is spoken of both as God, and as a creature. Yet the scriptural writers, although they often call him God, in respect to his eternal, never directly say he is a creature, in respect to his temporary nature. They speak of him with honour; and therefore, while they enumerate his lower characters, they style him peculiarly by that title which intimates his highest dignity. The same is done every where in relation to men. If a man hath various titles, we always give him the highest, when we mean to shew respect. In like manner, those writers give instances of divine worship paid him, and actually prescribe it, notwithstanding his created nature; for they never say any thing from whence it may be at all inferred, that they, even in supposition or imagination, divided his person;

wherein, as the 'fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily,' the whole is to be adored, although consisting of the human nature as well as the divine. Now, this by no means gives an open to creature-worship, nor contradicts the doctrine laid down in my last Discourse. If God had prescribed the worship of a delegated creature, it had, no doubt, been our duty to obey. But, God having absolutely forbidden all worship to be paid to creatures, and peremptorily restrained it wholly to himself, we are not at liberty to worship a mere creature. Yet, as we are assured Christ is God, and consequently the one only God; and farther, as we are commanded to worship him; his created nature can be no bar to our duty in that respect; nor can it ever convict us of creature-worship, till it is proved, that he is not God, or that we adore him purely as a creature. The respect we pay to a man, is paid to his whole person, soul and body, but only on account of the former, and therefore cannot be construed into any degree of veneration for a mere body. Nor can our adoring Christ be called creature-worship, because we worship him only on account of his divine nature, which gave that dignity to those sufferings, whereby, considered as man, he was exalted to universal dominion and adoration. The veneration we pay to Christ as man, being heightened by the adoration we pay him as God, becomes one undistinguished act of divine worship, which ought no more to be divided, than the person of the object to which it is paid. Neither, if Christ is truly God, and one with the Father, ought there to be any distinction in the adoration of a Being so essentially one. Accordingly, there is none in that hymn whereby God and the Lamb are adored by every creature, Rev. v. 11—13. If Christ is one undivided person, and divine, the act of worship paid to him ought to be one undivided act of divine worship. And, if he is one Being with the Father, the act of worship paid to both ought to be the same. If the unity of his person notwithstanding the assumption of the human nature, forbids all distinctions of worship in the first instance; much more ought his essential unity with the Father to forbid all such distinctions in the second, notwithstanding his eternal Sonship, which makes no inequality or distinction of nature.

But here our adversaries put us in mind, that Christ is

called 'the first-born of every creature,' Coloss. i. 15; and 'the beginning of the creation of God,' Rev. iii. 14. But his being called the first-born of every creature by no means intimates, that he is merely a creature; for the word 'first-born' is not always to be taken literally. It sometimes signifies pre-eminence, and sometimes dominion. 'The first-born of the poor,' Isaiah xiv. 30, signifies only the poorest of the poor. 'The first-born of death,' Job xviii. 13, signifies the most dreadful kind of death. God says, 'he will make David his first-born higher than the kings of the earth;' Psal. lxxxix. 27. But this gives David no priority of birth, either as a man, or a king; for he was not born before all other kings, much less before all other men; it only intimates super-eminence of dominion. Neither doth the title of 'first-born' give Christ this priority, because he was not born before all other men, or creatures, in the same sense with them. If another sense, then, is to be sought for, let us hear St. Paul in the same passage, that taking the whole together, we may the better understand his meaning. The apostle, after having told us, that 'Christ is the first-born of every creature,' ver. 15, says, 'All things in heaven and in earth were created by him, and for him,' ver. 16; that 'he is before all things,' that 'all things consist by him,' ver. 17; and that 'he is head of the body, the church; the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence;' ver. 18. Thus his priority of birth is interpreted, by the apostle himself, of his rising the first from the dead to a life immortal and eternal, and with this, you see, is connected his right of supreme dominion over all creatures. We need, therefore, look no farther for the sense of the word 'first-born,' as applied to Christ. It is in the same sense that St. John calls him, Rev. i. 5, 'the first-begotten of the dead;' and, chap. iii. 14, 'the beginning of the creation of God.' In these, and such-like places, the resurrection is spoken of as a creation or birth; and Christ as a man and a creature, derives his triumphant birthright and universal empire over all creatures, from his conquest of death. As the only-begotten Son of God by eternal generation, he went forth to create the worlds, and rested the seventh day, which he therefore hallowed and consecrated into a sabbath. As the Son both

of God and man, he went forth from the womb of a pure virgin to the work of redemption, or the new creation. From this work he rested also, by his resurrection from the dead on the first day of the week, which from thenceforward to commemorate his resting after having 'made all things new,' Rev. xxi. 5, 2 Cor. v. 17, was kept as the day of rest or sabbath. From hence he derives a new Sonship, as he was 'appointed the Son of God with power, by the resurrection of the dead,' Rom. i. 4; and acquires also an inheritance of pre-eminence or dominion over all things, Coloss. i. 18. Hence also, as all the faithful are 'the children of God, being the children of the resurrection,' Luke xx. 36, so Christ, who rose the first, acquired the right of primogeniture in this new kind of birth, and is therefore truly called the 'first-born of every creature,' both because in this sense he was born first, and because he inherits the Lordship over all. In all this his human nature only is spoken of, without the least eye to that supposed angelic nature whereto the Arians would needs affix the idea of his primogeniture.

This objected passage, you may perceive, instead of proving him only a creature, proves him the Creator, and consequently God.

There is no passage of Scripture whereof the Arians and Socinians make so much use, as that in the thirteenth of St. Mark's Gospel, where Christ saith, speaking of the destruction of the world, or of Jerusalem, 'Of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.' St. Matthew has not recorded these words 'neither the Son' when he relates the prediction of our Saviour, wherein he intermixes the signs of the two events mentioned. The words in St. Matthew seem indeed to be tantamount. They are these: 'Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.' If Christ is the one only true God, as I shall soon in the clearest manner prove from Scripture, it may, I must own, seem very strange, that, as such, he should be ignorant of this, or any other event. However the Socinians have no right to press us with this text, since they deny the prescience of God himself. But the words are certainly spoken of Christ as the Son of man, in which sense he is said 'to grow in wisdom;' and as a prophet, who

was commissioned to foretell some things, and to reserve others, with the silence, in respect to the latter, of those who are wholly ignorant of them. The words of St. Paul, Coloss. ii. 3, 'Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' appear to be the best comment on these of our Saviour; for, at the same time that they attribute omniscience to Christ, they give us to understand, that the abysses of his knowledge are not to be revealed. He so plainly gave the signs whereby the approaching ruin of Jerusalem was to be known, that none of the Christians were found there when the city was begirt by the Romans. This was sufficient for them, without the foreknowledge of the precise 'times and seasons, which the Father had put in his own power,' Acts i. 7; because the determination thereof was part of that providence which depended on his own prerogative or office, and therefore was not to be revealed by the Son. But if, merely as a man, and a prophet, the revelation of the day and hour was not committed to him, we are not to conclude from thence, that, purely as the Son of God he was ignorant of that or any thing else, since we in other places perceive 'he knew all things,' John xvi. 30; and that the Father concealed nothing from him; 'for the Father,' saith Christ, John v. 20, 'loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doth.' That Christ, nevertheless, sometimes speaks as a mere man might do, nay, and as one ignorant of that which he knew perfectly well, is plain from his words on some other occasions. Did he not know he was to die the death of the cross? Was he not sensible the prophets had predicted it? Matt. xxvi. 54, and his Father unalterably decreed it? Acts ii. 23. Did he not foretell it himself? John xii. 32. Did he not even resolve it? John x. 18. Could he have been the Messiah, or our Redeemer, without it? Yet, the night he was betrayed, 'he fell on his face in the garden, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;' Matt. xxvi. 39. Will the Arians infer from these words, that Christ did not foresee his own death, as absolutely certain? If they neither will, nor can, why will they urge us with his words concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, or of the world? Since it was proper for Christ thus to express himself in a prayer to his Father, concerning the possibility of

averting an event whereof he must have had a certain and infallible foreknowledge; why is his foreknowledge as to the precise time wherein Jerusalem, or the world, was to be destroyed, to come under the least suspicion on account of an expression of like import in effect, returned in answer to an inquiry, concerning which they who made it, had no right to satisfaction? Christ therefore tells them not the hour, nor the day; but he gives them the signs of both events as one, and said, 'Take heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.' Were we to conclude as the objectors do, we must infer the ignorance of the Creator from his saying, 'He repented that he had made man,' and the rest of the animal creation, Gen. vi. 7; and that he 'had set up Saul to be king,' 1 Sam. xv. 11; as if he had not foreseen either the depravity of mankind, or the defection of this prince. If we are so captiously to interpret Scripture, what will the Arians do with that which is said in the fifth of Isaiah concerning God's vineyard or people? 'I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes; I looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.' Was God absolutely disappointed? Had he no foresight of the iniquity and oppression whereof his people were guilty? St. Augustine observes, on this subject, that when God said, after trying Abraham, 'Now I know that thou fearest God;' we ought to understand him as saying, Now I have caused thee to know, that thou fearest God, inasmuch as God knew it before; and that, when our Saviour saith, John xv. 15, 'All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you,' we ought not to understand absolutely all things, but only all they were then able to receive; because, in the next chapter, he tells them, 'He had yet many things to say unto them, which they could not then bear,' and which, therefore, the Spirit was to teach them after his departure. I instance these passages to shew, that, as the exercise of our Saviour's attributes was in some measure limited by the ignorance, incapacity, disinclination, or unbelief, of those on whom they were exercised, so those attributes are sometimes spoken of as if they were limited in themselves. It is in this sense we are to understand the words of the evangelist, Mark vi. 5. 6, 'He could do there

no mighty work;'—and 'he marvelled because of their unbelief.' The faith of the sick was made necessary to his own cure; but we are not to conclude from hence, that our Saviour could not have healed him, though he had not believed, because he sometimes healed the absent, and raised the dead, who could not believe; but rather, that he would not, or could not consistently with the designation of his mission and office. Would it be unnatural to understand Christ in this passage as we do St. Paul, where he says to the Corinthians, 'I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified?' But, whether we can reconcile these words to our belief of Christ's prescience and divinity, or not, matters little to the debate about his divinity itself, since we can so fully prove it by innumerable passages of Scripture, too direct, express, and positive, to be balanced by one obscure passage, from whence the Arian is to draw the consequence himself, which may possibly be wrong; whereas the true and proper divinity of our blessed Saviour depends not on consequences of our drawing, but on such assertions of God himself as common sense cannot mistake the meaning of. If Christ is 'the true God,' he must 'know all things.' If there are some things, which, as man, he does not know, or which, as the commissioner of his Father, he is not empowered to reveal, this will not prove him to be a mere creature; for, in that case, how could it be true, that he is 'the wisdom of God,' and God himself? Again; if there are some things, which, as man, and a commissioner, he cannot do, neither will this prove him to be a mere creature, since 'he is able to subdue all things to himself,' and 'upholdeth all things by the word of his power.' If there is but one true God, as I have already shewn; and if Christ is that one true God, as I hope soon to shew; no consequences drawn by us, though from Scripture, can ever prove he is not truly God. But this matter must be left to the next opportunity. Let us, in the mean time, proceed with such other objections as seem to merit an answer.

Our adversaries farther insist, that Christ, John xvii. 3, calls the Father, in contradistinction to himself, 'the only true God.' Christ, it is true, there addressing the Father, calls him the only true God; but there is nothing in the

passage to shew, that he does this in contradistinction to himself. He only names himself afterward; but puts not the least sign of a negative on his own divinity, nor at all compares himself with the Father. Indeed he could not have done it, without contradicting what the Holy Ghost says of him in many places, particularly John i. 1, where he says, 'The Word was God;' and, 1 John v. 20, where he calls Christ 'the true God.' The opposers of our Saviour's divinity object to these latter words as not spoken of Christ, but without the least colour of reason, as any one may see who reads the whole verse, which runs thus: 'We know the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.' The whole connexion evidently shews the words to be spoken of Christ. Besides he is peculiarly called 'eternal life' in other places, as at ver. 12, 'He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.' Christ calls himself 'the resurrection and the life,' John xi. 25. Our adversaries allow Christ to be truly God, in some sense or other; for the Scriptures often expressly call him God; and he calls himself Jehovah, and God, as we shall hereafter see. If, therefore, this passage in the seventeenth of St. John's Gospel, proves any thing for the objectors it proves too much; for, if the Father only is the true God, then Christ is either no God at all, or a false God. But the passage sets forth no such thing. It only says, 'the Father is the only true God,' and we say the same; but it does not say, the Father alone is the true God. Between these two there is a wide difference. The first leaves it undetermined whether Christ is God, or not; and is the very expression itself of our Saviour, both in terms and meaning; whereas the last would exclude the divinity of the Son. The same observations, in substance, may serve to baffle the like objection founded on the words of St. Paul, 1 Cor. viii. 6, 'To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him: and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.' Here the Son is not excluded, in the application of the words 'one God' to the Father, from the divinity; no more than the Father is excluded, by the words 'one Lord,' applied to Jesus Christ, from dominion,

The Father is still Lord, though all power is given to the Son; and the Son is God, though that appellation is, in this place, connected immediately with the Father, from whom the Son, by eternal generation, hath his essence. In that passage, likewise, Eph. iv. 4—6, where it is said, 'There is one Spirit—one Lord—one God and Father of all,' the Son is not excluded from the divinity. If he were, how could St. Paul expressly call him God, as he does, Rom. ix. 5, 'Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever;' and 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory?' Or how could the Arians call him God in any sense, were his divinity here denied in a passage which tells us, 'To us there is but one God?'

Again, it is objected, that Christ distinguished himself from God, when he refused the appellation of 'good,' Matt. xix. 17, and ascribes it to God only. But does Christ really reprove him who called him 'good master?' All he says, is, 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God.' Was it more improper, or more untrue, in this man to call him 'good master,' than in him to call himself 'the good shepherd?' John x. 14. Was he not truly good, who was without sin, and went about doing all the good the people he was sent to would suffer him to do? Why then did he ask this question? No doubt, it was to try whether the man who had called him good, would confess him, according to the prophecies, to be the Messiah, and God. He probably saw the man was convinced of this in his heart; and we may guess the same by his question, 'Good master, what shall I do that I may have eternal life?' On this supposition, he could not, by any other method, have so naturally thrown it in his way to confess the divinity of him whom he had already applied to with so much respect, and for so important a piece of information. This passage, therefore, instead of derogating in the least from the divinity of our blessed Saviour, can bear no other rational interpretation, than such as strongly insinuates that very divinity.

But, farther, it is objected, that Christ cannot be God, since God calls him 'his servant' more than once, particularly Isaiah xlii. 1; quoted by St. Matthew xii. 18. How,

say they, can the same person be God, and the servant of God?

I answer, he was the servant of God his Father, inasmuch as he was his angel or messenger, who 'came not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him.' In order to this, 'he who was in the form of God, made himself of no reputation, or rather emptied himself, and took on him the form of a servant,' that he might become 'obedient to death, even the death of the cross;' that is, he became man, for as such it is that he is called a servant; but while, in this respect, he is said not to 'differ from a servant,' he is styled also 'the Heir and Lord of all;' Gal. iv. 1. Under this head, the supremacy of the Father, and the subjection of the Son, are urged from various passages of Scripture, on which our adversaries ground their opinion, that the Son is but a creature; and consequently not, in the proper sense of the word, God. Of these the chief are, 'There is one God and Father of all, who is above all,' Eph. iv. 6; and, 'The head of Christ is God,' 1 Cor. xi. 3. And is it not said of Christ, that he is 'over all, God blessed for ever?' Rom. ix. 5. There is, surely, but one God, one God who is over all. Christ, therefore, and the Father, are one, one in nature, one in Deity, although the Son, as such, is subject to his Father, as Father; and still more so, as he is the Son of man; in which latter sense it is that God is said to be his head; for it is, no doubt, in that sense that our Saviour, in the same verse, is said to be 'the head of every man' or 'of the church,' Eph. v. 23; for he being 'God, hath purchased it,' as man, 'with his own blood;' Acts xx. 28. Wherein the supremacy of the first Person, in regard to the second, consisted, before the latter took our nature on him, we cannot determine; we only know, that the first is called the Father, and the second the Son; and that the Father, in virtue of his paternity, sent the Son to instruct, and die for us. But we know also, that the Son, having, by the gift of his Father, that is, by generation, or a communication of nature, life in himself, as the Father had life in himself, freely and voluntarily laid down his life, as man, for the sheep, having power to lay it down, and to take it again. Although he did this, as he tells us, 'by the command of his Father,' yet, were he not God, as well as man, he could not have a right to dispose of his own life. As no

man hath given life to himself, so no man hath the disposal of it in his own power; for the issues of life and death belong to God only. What then could have given the man Christ Jesus a property in his own life? It must, no doubt, have been that infinitely higher life, which, although held by ineffable communication from the Father, 'of whom are all things,' yet belonged to the Son of God, 'by whom are all things, by and for whom all things were created.' On the whole, if there is but one God, and Christ is God, he can in no sense be of a nature inferior to that of his Father; for there cannot be a superior and an inferior God; and, therefore, the supremacy of the Father cannot possibly be founded on any difference of nature or essence, but only on that relation which Christ bears to him as his Son, of one and the same nature; or as a distinct person, voluntarily undertaking and holding an office under the Father. The truth is, the subjection or subordination of the Son is seldom or never mentioned in Scripture but with an eye to his humiliation; that is, to the assumption of human nature, and its consequences. Thus it is only that he is called a servant. Before it, he was in no sense a servant. No, 'he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God,' at that time when he vouchsafed to humble or empty himself, in order that he might become a servant, or man. Now we know, that the highest angels of light, and every creature, although of the most exalted dignity, are all the servants of God. Christ, therefore, could not have been a creature before he became man; for it is plain he only then became a servant. As we may look on Christ as the greatest of men, though subject to Joseph and Mary, so we may regard him as the greatest of beings, though subject to his Father. His subjection no more derogates from the dignity of his nature in the one case, than it does in the other.

It is still farther urged by the Arians, that Christ cannot properly be called God, since he himself says, John v. 30, 'I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.' Were this passage to be taken strictly, Christ must be less than the weakest of men; for every man can do something. Or, were the entire dignity of his person to be estimated by these words

alone, though understood with the utmost latitude, we could not possibly think of him as more than a mere man. Yet the Arians themselves allow him a much higher character, not only on account of his office, but of his nature also. They say he was before all worlds, and call him God. They must, therefore, not grant, but insist as well as we, that he spoke these words of his human nature. And, indeed, no farther back than the 27th verse, he had said, that 'his Father gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man;' which evidently shews, that he speaks, throughout the whole passage, of himself as the Son of man only. The same remark is to be made on what he delivers to his hearers, at ver. 26; 'As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son also to have life in himself;' a text urged likewise by the opposers of Christ's divinity, although it is as clear as the light, that he there speaks of himself as a man, because in the same sentence, he calls himself 'the Son of man.' If, however, the objectors will needs interpret this text of his superior nature, they ought to consider what it is to 'have life in himself, as the Father hath life in himself.' The Father, we know, hath it from all eternity, and in the highest independent sense. Christ, therefore, must have it in the same sense, though by communication, though by eternal communication, or he cannot have it, as the Father hath it, in himself. This cannot be said with truth, and in strictness, of any creature. But where is the sense, or rather where is the honesty, of Dr. Clarke, and the other Arians, in pressing us so often with these and the like texts, at the expense of their own hypothesis? It is only to serve the present turn. The dispute between them and us is not concerning the human nature of Christ; and, therefore, can never be affected either way by citations that relate purely to his humanity. No; our inquiry turns solely on that other and higher nature of Christ, whether it is truly a divine, or only an angelic nature. Now, is it not altogether disingenuous to make a sophistical parade of texts that relate not in the least to this higher nature, but only to that which Christ assumed in the womb of the Virgin? Were the Arians held to these their citations, must they not abandon their whole system? If such passages can characterise the whole person of Christ, he can be no more than a mere man; if

they intimate only his inferior nature, why are they urged in a dispute about the other, by men who own to us, and insist to the Socinians, that he actually hath another and a higher nature?

It is with the same shameless disingenuity that they never fail to object those places where our Saviour says, 'I proceeded forth and came from God;' John viii. 42; and that 'he was come from God and went to God;' chap. xiii. 3. Strictly speaking, no one can come from, or go to, God, because he is equally present every where; but, as God manifests his glory more especially in heaven, from thence our Saviour is said to come; so thither he is said to go, in the same sense, with respect to his human nature, as any other man may be said to change his place; with respect to his divine, in a sense utterly incomprehensible and unintelligible to us; but still in a sense as intelligible as that wherein he says, speaking of his Father, as well as himself, 'If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him;' John xiv. 23. Here change of place, or presence on condition, which in terms implies a possibility of absence, is ascribed to the Father, as well as the Son. He whom all acknowledge to be God, is so frequently said in the Old Testament to move to or from a place, that it is needless to particularize the passages. In whatever sense this is said of God, it may in the same be said of Christ, without derogating from his omnipresence, who was in heaven at the same time that he was on earth, if we believe John the Baptist in these words, spoken while Christ was here below, 'The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him;' John i. 18. Or if we believe Christ himself, who saith, 'No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven;' chap. iii. 13. But whereas, in the passages objected, Christ is said to come from God, and go to God, our adversaries insist he is therein distinguished from God, and consequently cannot be God. And we, on the other hand, insist, that so far the expression relates purely to the human nature, that is, the soul and body, of our Saviour, which, like those of other men, proceeded from the hands of their Maker, and were, when these words were

spoken, about to return to him again. Thus it is necessary we should understand them, whether we consider the approaching departure of Christ as man, which gave occasion to them, or the many other places of Scripture wherein he is, in the strictest sense of the word, called God.

The last objection I shall here take notice of, is, that which our opponents draw from the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, where we are told, 'Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to God,' ver. 24; 'after having put every thing else under his feet,' ver. 25—27; 'and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all;' ver. 28. Here, say they, the name and title of God is given to the Father only; and the subjection of Christ, from the consummation of all things, to all eternity, is predicted; which, in their judgment, could not be, were Christ God, equal with the Father.

We readily acknowledge, that the name and title of God is, in this place, given to the Father only; and that the subjection of Christ, as urged in the argument of our opponents, is foretold: but we think it cannot be concluded from hence, that the Son, in respect to his superior nature, is not God, equal with the Father, since he hath a lower nature, whereof all this, we insist, is said. At ver. 24, it is said, 'Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father.' Here 'the Father' is added only to denote a distinction between him and the Son, which had been needless, were not the Son God also; for, had the apostle said simply 'to God,' and not by way of distinction, subjoined 'the Father,' it might have been apprehended, that none was God but he to whom the kingdom is to be delivered up. But, to decide the present question, it will be necessary to consider what this kingdom is which the Son shall deliver up, and how it came to be peculiarly his.

The kingdom of the Son is an 'absolute dominion over every thing in heaven, in earth, and under the earth;' Phil. ii. 10. 'This kingdom he acquired by donation from the Father, on account of his death;' ver. 8, 9. 'The right of judging this kingdom accrues to him as the Son of man;' John v. 27. 'It was by the sacrifice of his blood that he became the Mediator between God and the subjects of this

kingdom;' Heb. ix. 14, 15. 'It was through his death that he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,' Heb. ii. 14; and thereby finished his conquests, 'and reduced the kingdom to perfect obedience;' 1 Cor. xv. 26. Hence it appears, that, in the passage objected, Christ is spoken of purely as that man whom 'God had highly exalted, and to whom he had given a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow,' &c. Phil. ii. 9, 10. It is true, indeed, that, had not Christ been God as well as man, he could neither have acquired, nor exercised, this boundless empire. However, we see it is as man that he dies, that he conquers, that he reigns; and as man, therefore, that he resigns his power, when all the ends of his commission are answered, 'that God,' whether as the Father, as the Son, or as the Holy Ghost, 'may be all in all,' without the interposition of a created delegate, just on the same footing as before the worlds were made. Be the superior nature of Christ what it will, it hath nothing to do with our debate on the passage before us; for, as man only, Christ acquires a kingdom, resigns it, and it is subject to God, from the final judgment, the last act to be done by him, in consequence of his commission, to all eternity.

But what would our Arian adversaries infer from this passage? Is it not, that the whole person of Christ shall be subject to the Father, from the last day, to all eternity? And shall not we also have as good a right to infer, that now, and till that period, his whole person possesses an absolute dominion over all things, and is not subject? What does the change or resignation imply but this? And surely this is a great deal too much for either the Arian or Socinian system of subordination; too much indeed for reason itself to digest, because reason will not suffer us to suppose, that a mere creature should be intrusted with an unlimited, unsubordinate, uncontrollable, dominion over all things, during any space of time. But, in the midst of this, it should be considered, that 'God was all in all' before Christ was a man; that, in some sense or other, he is so still; that Christ, 'by whom, and for whom, all things were made,' was possessed of an unlimited empire over all things antecedently to his incarnation; and that David, quoted by St. Paul, says to him, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;' Heb. i. 8.

The title to dominion, conferred on him as man, and on account of his death, he is to resign; but that which he holds as God, he keeps for ever and ever; 'for he shall reign for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end;' Luke i. 33; Rev. xi. 15. This last text was uttered by the seventh angel, 'When the time of the dead was come that they should be judged;' ver. 18; so that Christ's kingdom is to last for ever, from and after the day of judgment. Accordingly, power, as well as 'honour and glory,' are ascribed to him, in conjunction with the Father, 'for ever and ever,' in the hymn of the whole universe, Rev. v. 13.

As in the next Discourse, I intend to prove the divinity of our blessed Saviour, sometimes from passages, which, in this, I have shewn to have been spoken of him as a man; to prevent your thinking I contradict myself in so doing, give me leave to observe to you here, that the same passage, which, in one part of it, speaks of him as God, in another speaks of him as man; or, at the same time that it speaks of him as man, necessarily leads us, by a verbal quotation, to other passages where the name or attributes of God are expressly given him. I need not trouble you with instances of this now, because they will be sufficiently apparent to the attentive, in the prosecution of my design.

They who are acquainted with the controversy concerning the divinity of Christ must see, that I have singled out those objections from Scripture, to that divinity, which are of the greatest weight and moment; indeed, which are of any weight at all; and they see, I hope, that there is nothing in them, nothing, I mean, when set in opposition to the many express and positive passages that prove our blessed Saviour to be truly and properly God. Had the objected texts been accompanied by no such passages, although some of them might have stood for us, rather than our adversaries, on a fair and natural construction, yet I must own there are others, from which it must have been inferred, that he was only a creature. But what are the inferences of human reason, so apt to err in every branch of knowledge, when placed over against the clear and positive assertions of God himself? He tells us, 'There is but one God.' He says, 'To us there is but one God.' He commands us 'to worship and serve him alone.' He also often assures us, that 'Christ

is God; and orders the very angels to worship him.' Christ, therefore, is the one only true God. This, surely, with men of reason and candour, who believe the Scriptures, is sufficient to decide the controversy about our Saviour's divinity, come what will of the conclusions and deductions drawn from the darker passages of Scripture, which no where says, that he is not God, or that he is but a mere creature.

Although every real Christian must be concluded by this short decisive summary of the merits, whereon both the learned and illiterate ought to found their faith in Christ's true and proper divinity; as, nevertheless, something farther may be requisite to the conviction of men already prejudiced against it, I shall, God willing, in the next Discourse, lay before you the scriptural proofs of that doctrine, which, I trust, will appear too full and satisfactory to leave any doubts about it in the mind of him who takes the Scriptures for the word of God, and knows they can neither contradict him, nor themselves.

In the mean time let us earnestly beseech God so to direct our inquiries, that we may find the truth, and that the truth may set us free from all our doubts and divisions concerning our blessed Saviour; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE VI.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST PROVED.

PHIL. III. 8.

I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

IT is no wonder the apostle should esteem all other gains as losses, in comparison with the knowledge of Christ, since to know Christ, is to know God, and all the means of salvation;

'for in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;' Coloss. ii. 9. 'And with him God shall freely give us all things;' Rom. viii. 32. 'This is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent;' John xvii. 3. 'Thus, therefore, saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me;' Jer. ix. 23, 24. It was for these reasons that St. Paul, speaking of his visit to the Corinthians, says, 'I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God; for I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;' 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2.

To know Christ, therefore, is infinitely better than all other knowledge; and the most excellent part of this knowledge is, to know that which is most excellent in Christ, namely, his divine nature, which gave dignity to those sufferings whereby we are redeemed, and majesty to that dispensation whereby we are reclaimed and governed. If he is God, we must believe in him, depend on him, and worship him, as such. As 'he is the way, and the truth, and the life,' so that 'no man cometh to the Father but by him,' John xiv. 6. to know who he is, must be the prime article of knowledge; for 'he that hath seen him, hath seen the Father;' ver. 9.

But whereas about this there are infinite disputes in the world, some insisting, that Christ is the one only eternal God; others, that he is only an angel, and raised to the dignity of a god; and others again, that he is but a mere man; I endeavoured, in the preceding Discourse, to answer the chief objections brought against his true and proper divinity; and shall now, in this, lay before you the principal proofs of that divinity, as they are found in holy Scripture, which alone can determine the question either way, this being a point above the investigation of reason, and not to be decided but by God himself. And that I shall do by shewing,

First, That as he is the Messiah, the Word, and the Son of God, he must be God:

Secondly, That the incommunicable attributes of God are given to him by the inspired writers:

Thirdly, That the incommunicable name, or names, of God, are given to him by those writers:

Fourthly, That he takes the same to himself, and denies the being of any other God:

And, lastly, That divine worship, that is, the incommunicable worship of God, is actually given him by divine appointment.

That Jesus is the Christ, or Messiah, according to 1 John v. 1. is now taken for granted by all Christians; and that, agreeably to the prophetic character of the Messiah, he must as such, be God, is evident from Isa. vii. 14. 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel;' compared with Matt. i. 22, 23. 'Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us;' and farther compared with John i. 1. 14. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' Psal. xxiv. 4. 8. and Hosea i. 7. are generally applied to the same purpose. But the texts already cited at large make it as plain that the Messiah is God, as it is that Jesus is the Messiah. But the divinity of the Messiah is farther cleared of all doubt by what is said in Rev. xxi. 3, 4, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying;' and, in the twenty-second and twenty-third verses, where the apostle speaks of the New Jerusalem; 'I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.' Observe here, that these words, 'the tabernacle of God is with men,' and 'he will dwell with them,' are in substance the very same with John i. 14, 'The Word,' or God, 'was made flesh, and dwelt,' or, as it

is in the original, 'made his tabernacle, among us.' Now compare this with what God is pleased to say in Ezek. xxxvii. 27, 'My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people;' and with what Isaiah says of the church, or the New Jerusalem; chap. lx. 1, 'Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee;' ver. 19, 20, 'The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory; and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.' Here it is very observable, that the Spirit, speaking by St. John, does but quote what he had said by Ezekiel and Isaiah; that in the passages both of the apostle and the prophets, the same subject, Christ's church, city, or kingdom, is treated of; that, in both, the same expressions are used; that the Lamb is Christ; that this Lamb is called the light of the New Jerusalem; and that this light, or glory, is called the Lord, and God.

In the second place, Christ is called the Word, or wisdom, of God. If we consider the sense of this title, as applied to him in Scripture, and observe the connexions that attend it, we shall need nothing more to convince us of his divinity. This word, as St. Ignatius observes in his epistle to the Magnesians, is not the pronounced, but the substantial, Word of God. It is worth remarking, that this substantial or personal Word was not altogether unknown to the people of God before our Saviour's time; nor even to the pagan philosophers both before and after it. We are told, 1 Sam. iii. 21, that 'the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh, by the Word of the Lord.' David speaks as plainly of him in the thirty-third Psalm, as St. John; 'By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made.' Solomon also, in the eighth of his Proverbs, gives his encomium under the name of Wisdom; but with such personal characters, and in such terms, as would induce one to think St. John had the passage in view when he writ the first verse of his Gospel. 'The Lord possessed me,' says Wisdom, 'in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting. When God prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass on the face of the depth, &c. then

was I by him, as one brought up with him.' How near is this to the words of the apostle, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God!' Likewise, when he writ the first verse of his First Epistle, where he calls Christ 'the Word of life,' he seems to have copied it from the thirty-fifth of this chapter, 'Whoso findeth me, findeth life.' The ancient Rabbis and Philo Judæus, make frequent mention of him by his name of Logos or Word, calling him the Son of God, and ascribing the attributes of God to him. Nay, Philo says the Logos was that God who appeared to Adam after his fall, to Abraham, and to Moses in the bush. The author of the Book of Wisdom, written some ages before our Saviour's time, says, it was the Logos, that plagued the Egyptians, and calls him Almighty; 'Thine Almighty Word leapt down from heaven, out of thy royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction;' Wisdom xviii. 15. Zeno, Plato, Plotinus, Amelius, and Iamblichus, speak of him by the same name, and almost with equal propriety and honour. St. John, you see, was far from broaching a novelty, when he gave him the same appellation of Logos, or Word, and expressly called him God. So far he might have gone as a Rabbi, or philosopher; but when he affixes this title to our Saviour, he speaks in the character of an apostle, and must be believed in the plain sense of his words. It is observable, that this first verse of St. John's Gospel must be flatly contradictory, on the Arian hypothesis to what God himself says, Deut. xxxii. 39, 'I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me.' God says, 'There is no God,' that is, no other God, 'with him;' but St. John says, 'The Word was with God, and was God.' The Word, therefore, cannot possibly be another God, as the Arians blasphemously maintain. But it is not in this single passage only, together with its context, that our apostle calls Christ the Word, and points out his divinity to us; he does the same in the nineteenth of the Revelation, where, alluding to Isaiah lxiii. 2. and lix. 17, he 'saw one riding in heaven on a white horse, who was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, whose name was called the Word of God, and who had on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords,' which is the proper style of the

great and only God, as you may see in Deut. x. 17. and Psal. cxxxvi. 3.

In the third place, the divinity of our blessed Saviour may be clearly proved from his being called in Scripture the Son of God, by way of excellence, and the only-begotten Son of God. St. John tells us, in his First Epistle, chap. iv. 15. that 'whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.' Here you perceive the peculiar character, and the very sum total, of all happiness, is annexed to this article of our faith, 'that Jesus is the Son of God.' This will seem altogether unaccountable to us, while we understand no more by the Son of God, than the Son of his love and favour. This, if we believe the Scriptures, may be said of angels, and all good Christians. As God is our Creator, we may be called his sons; and Adam, because he was the immediate work of God, is called the son of God, in our Saviour's genealogy. In this sense God is the Father of us all, whether our dispositions and actions render us pleasing to him, or not. But, if we shew ourselves grateful for his goodness, and dutiful and obedient to his will, 'if we do not commit sin, then we know we are born of God;' 1 John iii. 9. that is, we know we are, not only his children by creation, but his dearly and well-beloved children, by regeneration and adoption, through Christ Jesus. The angels, those superior creatures of God, who kept their first station, are, in the book of Job, and elsewhere, called also the sons of God. Is it no otherwise that Christ is styled the Son of God? Shall God dwell in us, and we in him, merely for believing, that Christ is in this sense the Son of God? Why may not the same happy privilege be annexed to our believing, on the authority of Scripture, that any particular angel, or man, is thus related to the infinite Being? You see, this cannot possibly be the meaning of St. John. But, if we consult the ninth verse of the same chapter, we shall clearly perceive what he intends by the Son of God; for therein he says, 'In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.' Here it appears, that he, whom, in the one place he calls only the Son of God, he calls, in the other, the

only-begotten Son of God; and that as, by the former, he represents this article of our faith as the great means of union with God; so, by the latter, he sets forth Christ as the source of eternal life. From the two passages laid together, and strengthened by a variety of other places, all speaking clearly to the same effect, we may easily gather the pre-eminent dignity of our Saviour's person, and the necessary importance of our faith in him as the Son of God.

Neither Scripture nor common sense give us any idea of more than two sorts of sonship; the one by nature, and the other by election or adoption. Christ must be the Son of God in one only of these senses. Now he cannot be concluded the Son of God by adoption, from the light this matter is set in by Scripture, because he is so often styled his only-begotten Son (though we are there called his sons, and said to be begotten of him); which he could not be, were he no more than an angel, or a man; for, in that sense, both are frequently called the sons of God in Scripture, which, whatsoever it may seem to do in terms, cannot contradict itself in meaning. The very Deists themselves, in their distress for scriptural contradictions, never thought of trumping up this for one; which shews, that even they regarded the sonship of Christ, and that of angels or men, as quite different things in the language of Scripture. How would it sound in the ears of Christians, or comport with the Scriptures, to say, Christ is not the only-begotten Son of God; or Christ is merely his adopted Son; which are tantamount as to the point in hand? If therefore Christ is not the Son of God by adoption, he must be his Son by nature; and, if by nature, he is of the same nature and substance with his Father, as properly, as truly, as any man is of the same nature and substance with him who begot him. If then, he is of the same nature with his Father, he is God. Accordingly, the inspired writers often call him God; and he himself says, 'I and my Father are one Being.' After all, shall they who receive the Scriptures as the sure word of God, and the only rule of their faith, say, Christ is but a creature, is but the adopted Son of God? How could he, who once was nothing, and, after having a being bestowed on him, was, out of mere favour, like other creatures,

adopted and taken into the family of God, by his sole merit, procure adoption for all men?

The prophets, to whom he was not fully revealed, spoke of him in quite a different strain from that of the Arians and Socinians. David, reporting the declarations of God concerning Christ, says, in the second Psalm, 'I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.' In the ninety-seventh, the psalmist gives him, over and over again, the name of Jehovah; and, in the midst of a most exalted description of his power and majesty, says, 'Worship him, all ye angels,' or gods. Nay, in the forty-fifth Psalm, he calls him 'the Mighty One,' and says to him, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.' Agur, in the thirtieth of the Proverbs, speaking by questions concerning the mysterious nature and name of the Creator, says, 'What is his name, and his Son's name, if thou canst tell?' You see, he asks not of sons, as of many; and therefore cannot be construed as inquiring about the names of angels. And, as Agur inquires after his name, and the psalmist gives it, calling him Lord or Jehovah, and God, so Micah, ch. v. 2. discovers the eternity of his generation, thereby distinguishing him from all other sons, from all the other titular sons of God: 'Thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.' Here the goings forth, or generation, of the Son, from the Father, are represented as co-eternal with the Father; and a just foundation is laid for that beautiful similitude, so often applied to the Son, of light, which, issuing from the luminous body, is coeval with its source. The Jews in our Saviour's time, being acquainted with the passages I have cited from the Old Testament, must certainly have taken this expression, the Son of God, as applied by Christ to himself, in an infinitely higher sense than the Arians do, or they could never have charged him with blasphemy, nor with 'making himself equal with God,' for that application, as we read they did, John v. 18. x. 33. where

we find they were going to stone him for taking this honour to himself. But he, instead of explaining away what he had said, argues, *a fortiori*, 'If they were called gods, to whom the word of God came, say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But, if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him;' John x. 35—38. This was all the apology he made for his having said, 'I and my Father are one Being;' ver. 30. This was all the answer he gave to their saying, 'He made himself God;' ver. 33. Yet, in this, he was so far from receding, or denying the charge, that 'the Jews were but the more offended, and sought again to take him;' ver. 39.

In the fourth place, that our Saviour is God, may appear unquestionably from his having the incommunicable attributes of God ascribed to him by the Holy Ghost, without limitation. You have heard by the passage just now cited from Micah, that he is the eternal Son of God. In Coloss. i. 17, 18. he is said 'to have been before all things,' and is called 'the beginning;' and for these reasons it is there affirmed, that 'by him all things consist.' St. John, chap. i. 1. expresses himself to the same effect: 'In the beginning,' that is, from eternity, 'was the Word;' and frequently in his First Epistle, chap. i. 1. 'That which was from the beginning;' as also, chap. ii. 13. 'Ye have known him that is from the beginning.' That, by this expression, so often repeated, he must have meant the same as from eternity, you will be convinced, as soon as you reflect, that, in the Revelation, his Master often says to him, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last.'

God, you know, is peculiarly styled the searcher of hearts, because he is omniscient. He claims this as the prerogative of himself alone, and denies it to all others; Jerem. xvii. 9, 10. 'The heart is deceitful, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart.' Now we may see Christ in the exercise of this divine attribute, Matt. ix. 3, 4. 'The scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth; because he said to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee. But Jesus, knowing their

thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?' Instances of this are frequent in the gospel; and no wonder, since St. Paul says of him, Heb. iv. 12, 13, 'The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' The eleven apostles, in a body, and by a solemn act of worship, ascribe to him this peculiar act of infinite wisdom, as we see in their prayer at the election of a successor to Judas: 'Thou, Lord, who knowest the secrets of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen.'

We are not to be surprised at his searching the heart, since omniscience is directly ascribed to him, not only by affirmations limited to this particular species or instance of wisdom, but by such as give him the attribute in its full extent. St. Peter, who first confessed the Christian faith, says to him, John xxi. 17, 'Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.' His Master is so far from blaming him either for the antecedent, or the consequent which he draws from it, that he thereupon finally commits to him the care of his sheep. On Christ's telling his disciples, John xvi. 28, 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father;' they say, 'Lo, now speakest thou plainly,' ver. 29; 'now are we sure that thou knowest all things:—by this we believe that thou camest forth from God;' ver. 30. Here again Christ is as far from correcting their confession of his omniscience, as of his mission. On the contrary, he answers, 'Do you now believe?' as if he meant to upbraid them for not having sooner believed, as they then did.

The immutability peculiar to God alone, is expressly given him, Heb. i. by a quotation from Psalm cii., 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old, as doth a garment; and, as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.' That this is spoken of God

only in the Psalm, and directly applied to Christ, by the express appellation of God, in the Epistle, any one may see, who will be at the pains to compare both. Hence it is that the apostle, in the same Epistle, chap. xiii. 8, says of him, 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.'

His immensity, or omnipresence, is clearly represented to us, Matt. xxviii. 20, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;' and, in John iii. 13, 'No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.' In the first of these passages he speaks, as none but Jehovah can properly speak, of himself, making all times and places present with him as one time and place. He says, you see, in the present tense, 'I am with you;' concerning the future, 'to the end of the world.' And how is he to be with them? Not only when gathered together in one place, as then, but when dispersed over the whole world. In the other passage he represents himself as present in heaven while he is speaking to them on earth; which could not be true, did not he fill heaven and earth.

His omnipotence is declared in the strongest terms. The Baptist, speaking of him, John iii. 31, says, 'He that cometh from above is above all.' St. Paul says, Phil. iii. 21, 'He is able even to subdue all things to himself;' and, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. i. 3, 'He upholdeth all things by the word of his power.' But, in his Epistle to the Romans, chap. ix. 5, he ascribes omnipotence and divinity to him at once; speaking of the Jews, he saith, 'Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.' And, which may serve instead of a thousand authorities, Christ himself says, Rev. i. 8, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.'

As all the works of God, wherewith we are any way concerned, are distinguished from one another, and made known to us, by their essential properties or qualities; so the infinite Being is distinguished from all his creatures, and revealed to our understandings, by his peculiar attributes, which are here, in their full extent, attributed to Christ. From hence we must either infer his divinity in a true, strict, and proper sense; or else we must confound the infinite na-

ture with the finite; whereas there is not only no medium between them, but an infinite distance, nay, a sort of contrariety, as will appear, if we consider the sense of these terms, created and uncreated, finite and infinite. This argument, drawn from the scriptural application of the unimpartible attributes of God to Christ, will acquire a prodigious accession of strength, if we view him in the execution of those offices which necessarily require those attributes; such as his judging the world, John v. 22, 23, and several other places of Scripture. And,

In the fifth place, his creating all things; which gives the argument for his Divinity the force of all those reasonings for the being of a God, deducible from the works of creation. Now the creation of all things is, in Scripture, ascribed to him in terms so clear and express, as can leave no doubt in the mind of any reader, whether it was the intention of the Holy Ghost to represent him to us as the Creator of the world. Nay, the terms in which this great point is revealed, go yet farther; for they not only tell us he made the world, that is, all things both above and below, but that all things were made for him; so that he is set forth to us both as the Proprietor and Maker of the whole creation. Well, therefore, may a Christian call him, especially since the Scriptures so often do it, 'the Jehovah,' that is, 'the Being, or the Lord, the Lord of the whole earth, the Lord of lords, and the King of kings.' To illustrate this, I shall select a few passages out of many. 'All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made;' John i. 3. If he made all things that were made, either he made himself, or he never was made. 'The world was made by him;' John i. 10. 'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God;' Heb. xi. 3. 'Thou, Lord,' saith David to Christ, 'in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands;' Psal. cii. 25. Heb. i. 10. St. Paul, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Colossians, is still more particular and express in speaking of Christ as the Creator: 'By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.' Was he not before all

things that were made, since they were all made for him? And, if he was before all things that were made, surely he himself could not have been made, for then he must have been before himself. What now can the Arians, or Semi-Arians, who say Christ is a creature of the angelic order, reply to this passage, wherein it is so positively affirmed, not only that Christ created all the orders of angels, not excepting the very highest, but that he created them for himself, so that 'all things which the Father hath are his,' John xvi. 15. his own property by right of creation? Exclusive of revelation and authority, we have no other way of proving the being of one infinite cause, but by observations made on the works of creation; and by deducing from those observations such reasonings as serve to convince us, that things so limited in their natures could not have given being to themselves. To raise a being out of nothing, and to bestow beauty, proportion, and excellence or happiness, on that being, is to create; and to create, exceeds infinitely the power of all limited natures. If the Scriptures, therefore, set forth what is true, when they ascribe to Christ the creation of all things visible and invisible, spirits as well as matter, Christ is certainly the one Infinite Being, or God. Our adversaries do but beat the air, when they tell us Christ did not of himself create the world; but that God created it by him as an instrumental, rather than an efficient cause. We acknowledge that Christ, both as our Creator and Redeemer, acted by the power and authority communicated eternally to him from the Father. But we insist, that this power and authority were ever naturally inherent in him as the only Son of God; and that he is, therefore, in respect to the creation, no instrument, but a true efficient. If it were not so, David, speaking by the Spirit, Psal. cii. and quoted by the same Spirit, Heb. i. 10, would never have said to Christ, 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands.' He plainly distinguishes his own power of operation from that of the Father, as personally inherent in himself; John v. 17. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;' and in Isa. xliv. 24, he ascribes to himself alone, considered as the Lord, or God, the whole work of creation; for, that Christ is the speaker throughout this chapter, will presently

appear by his calling himself the First, and the Last, in the Revelation, as well as here: 'Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb; I am the Lord that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.' What sign or shadow of instrumentality is to be picked out of these words? Is it not a kind of blasphemy against God, common sense, and Scripture, to ascribe the creation to a creature, or any but God himself? Yet here it is ascribed to Christ, by him who could not lie: Christ, therefore, is no creature, but God.

Accordingly, I shall now shew, in the sixth place, that the Scriptures call him, and, if we believe them, that he called himself, God. All agree, that what is said, Isa. ix. 6, is said directly and expressly of Christ: 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God,' &c. These words, with the context, evidently explain themselves of Christ or the Messiah, and are applied to him, Luke ii. 11. and John iii. 6. Now here he is called 'El Gibbor,' that is, the most mighty God. El, we know, is that name of God which expresses his power, and, with the addition of Gibbor, God, or the powerful one, who is mighty. Both the name and the epithet intimate power; and, therefore, together, are best translated by 'the most mighty God.' St. John opens his Gospel with asserting the divinity of Christ: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;' John i. 1. St. Thomas, after being convinced of his resurrection, cries out to him, 'My Lord, and my God.' His beloved apostle calls him 'the true God;' 1 John v. 20. St. Paul calls him 'the great God;' Tit. ii. 13. and, in his First Epistle to Timothy, ch. iii. 16, he establishes the doctrine both of his divinity and incarnation, in the most plain and express terms: 'Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.' The same doctrines he as positively and expressly establishes, Col. ii. 9, where, speaking of Christ, he says, 'In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' Observe what Hosea, distinguishing him from his Father, chap.

i. 7, says of him: 'I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God.' Observe what St. Paul, Rom. ix. 33, quotes from Isaiah viii. 13, 14, and applies to Christ. The words of the apostle are: 'It is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.' The words of the prophet are these: 'Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be your sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel.' Simeon, Luke ii. 34, makes the same application of the prophecy: 'Behold, this child is set for the falling, and rising again, of many in Israel.' St. Peter joins this passage of the prophet with another, Isa. xxviii. 16. 'Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation;' and very clearly explains this stone as 'the sure foundation of them that believe; and as a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, to the infidel and disobedient;' 1 Pet. ii. 6—8. Here you see him, who is figured by 'the stone,' called the Lord of hosts; and you also see that this Lord of hosts, is no other but Christ. You know also, that the Lord of hosts is one of the peculiar names of God.

It is as much as the imagination of the reader can do to accompany the majestic description which Isaiah gives of his appearance in the temple, styling him, at the same time, the 'Lord of hosts,' chap. vi. and which St. John quotes, and applies to him, in the twelfth of his Gospel, by these words: 'These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.' 'In the year,' saith the prophet, 'that Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim—and one cried unto another, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, and the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.' The same prophet, in his sixty-third chapter, speaks throughout the whole, of Christ by the name of Jehovah, as any one may perceive by comparing what is said there, and in the nineteenth of the Revelation, concerning the redness of his apparel. From this chapter, it is evident the prophet speaks of him as of

the very 'God that brought the children of Israel out of the sea;' ver. 11.—'that led them by the right hand of Moses, with his glorious arm dividing the waters before them;' ver. 12.—'that led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness,' &c. ver. 13. After having said this of him, the prophet then addresses himself to him by prayer, and says in the name of his people, 'Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness, and thy glory;' ver. 15.—'Doubtless thou art our Father—Thou, O Lord [Jehovah], art our Father, our Redeemer, thy name is from everlasting.' It is remarkable, that, at ver. 9. he says of him, 'In all their affliction he was afflicted,' which cannot be true of God in any other sense than as Christ; and that, ver. 10, he points at the discontents and murmurings of the ancient Israelites, 'whereby they rebelled, and vexed Christ's holy spirit, so that he was turned to be their enemy, and fought against them;' in the very same manner with St. Paul, who saith, 1 Cor. x. 9, 'Neither let us tempt Christ, as many of them also tempted, and were destroyed with serpents.' From whence we may gather, that both the prophet and the apostle understood the same person, the first by Lord, and the second by Christ; and that this person was the God of the Israelites; for, in that passage, Num. xxi. 5, 6. to which the latter certainly, and the former probably, alludes, he is said to be that very God: 'The people spake against God—and the Lord [Jehovah] sent fiery serpents among the people—and much people of Israel died.' If, then, Christ is the God of Israel, he is the eternal God, of whom it is said, Deut. xxxiii. 26, 27, 'There is none like unto thy God, O Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge.'

By what hath been said, and a great deal more that might be said, you may perceive the sacred writers frequently give the name of God, in its full extent, to Christ. You shall quickly be made sensible he takes the same to himself. The scriptural writers speak only by authority from him. They utter what he dictates; 'for all Scripture is given by inspiration of God;' 2 Tim. iii. 16. If, they, therefore, who do but speak his words, call him God, it is the same thing as his saying it himself. However, we desire not to take advantage of this. Christ hath often pronounced it with his own lips.

When the Jews sent priests and Levites to John Baptist, to inquire who he was, John i. 19, he said, 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaias;' ver. 23. By this declaration he plainly set himself forth as the forerunner of Christ, the great Shepherd, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, ch. xl. 3. 'The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert an highway for our God.' Observe how the words of John and Isaiah, laid together, call him, who was to come after John, both Lord and God. And now turn to the tenth of the same Gospel, where you will hear Christ calling himself, ver. 11, 'the good Shepherd; —whose voice the sheep hear and know; who putteth them forth, and goeth before them; whom they follow;' ver. 3, 4. 'by whom they go in and out, and find pasture;' ver. 9. Consider well the peculiar character of the good, the great Shepherd, our Saviour here takes to himself; and then compare it with the same character described by Isaiah, ch. xl. 10, 11, in consequence of what was said, ver. 3, 4, concerning the forerunner, and you will clearly perceive Christ styles himself both Lord and God, which are there made the peculiar titles of the Shepherd. The words are these: 'Behold the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.' If John the Baptist is foretold in the third and fourth verses, as he himself says he is, Christ must be foretold in the tenth and eleventh; for it is evident, that the way is ordered to be prepared, in the former, for him whose pastoral character is described with incidents of tenderness so peculiar to Christ, in the latter. You see, from the whole, that our blessed Saviour, in calling himself 'the Shepherd,' calls himself, modestly indeed, but by an unavoidable consequence, both Lord and God. It is by a like necessary consequence that he calls himself God, when he points the messengers of John, who came to know whether he was the Messiah, to the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, by an express quotation of the fifth and sixth verses, concerning the miracles to be performed on the blind, deaf, and lame, at his coming, who is

promised, ver. 4, in these words: 'Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense, he will come and save you.' Our Saviour, having wrought the miracles here predicted, does not call himself God, because it was not his way to bear witness of himself, neither does he even say he was the Messiah; he only appeals to the prophecy, wherein the wonderful things he had done in the sight of the messengers were foretold, wherein his coming is promised, and wherein he is twice called God. This now is the same, in effect, as calling himself God; it is the same as saying, Let John compare what you have seen me doing with the prophecy of Isaiah, and then judge for himself whether I am not he that should come, who is expressly called God in that very prophecy.

St. John, Rev. i. 7, says, 'Behold, he [Christ] cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.' This is a quotation from Zech. xii. 10, where he who was pierced, and who, you see, can be no other than Christ, after being called the Lord [Jehovah], ver. 1, says, 'I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace, and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only son.—The land shall mourn, every family apart,' &c. In this passage both the divine and human nature of Christ, together with his conferring the Holy Spirit, with his death, and with the compunction of those who slew him, are fully and clearly represented in his own words. St. Paul, in the twelfth of his Epistle to the Hebrews, having stated a comparison between the law and the gospel, and likewise noting the different manner of introducing them, comes at length to compare Christ and Moses as lawgivers; and prefers the former, as of greater authority; quoting those remarkable words of Haggai, wherein he alludes to the shaking of Mount Sinai, at the delivery of the law, ver. 25, 26, 'See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for, if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall we not escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven; whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying,

Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.' You perceive here, that he who 'speaketh from heaven, whose voice shook the earth,' and who promises 'to shake both earth and heaven,' is Christ. Now look back to the words in Haggai himself, chap. ii. 6, and you will find Christ uttering these very words by the prophet, and calling himself the Lord of hosts: 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth.' Five times in this short speech he calls himself by the awful name of the Lord of hosts. Farther, if you compare the words of St. Paul, 'His voice then shook the earth,' with those of Moses, Exod. xix. 18. you will perceive the apostle speaks of Christ as that very God who gave the law on Mount Sinai.

The same apostle, in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians, says, that Christ, 'being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yet humbled himself, and took on him the form of a servant; and in this form became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' 'As I live,' saith this same Lord, Rom. xiv. 11, 'every knee shall bow to me, as it is written.' Written, where? Why, Isaiah xlv. 21. 23. 'There is no God else beside me. I have sworn by myself, that unto me every knee shall bow.' You see, he sweareth by himself; and St. Paul gives the reason, in reference to a like instance, Heb. vi. 13. namely, 'because he could swear by no greater.' When St. Thomas called him 'his Lord, and his God,' he took what was said as his right, otherwise he would have reproved the apostle, as the angel did St. John, Rev. xix. 10, for paying him the respect that was due only to God. But, instead of this, our Saviour plainly intimates an approbation of his faith, thus confessed, and tenderly blames him for not having believed on less evidence. We all acknowledge, that the Father is God: and Christ says, 'I and the Father are one being.' Does he not, in this, call himself God? It is the first article of our

faith to believe in one God only, who called himself by the peculiar name of Jehovah, which being interpreted, signifies I AM. This proper, this incommunicable, name of the one only God, Christ takes to himself, John viii. 58, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.' How comes it to pass, that the Jews should take up stones to cast at him, for thus making himself God; and that so many of his pretended disciples should now insist he meant no such matter by it, furnishing him with an excuse, whereby, in their opinion, he might have easily refuted the imputation of this seeming blasphemy? And how came it also to pass, that Christ offered neither their excuse, nor any qualification of his own, but immediately hid himself from their fury, and went out of the temple? Our adversaries will say, the Jews did not give him time. What then! was this prophet, greater and wiser than Solomon, this searcher of hearts, who knew what was in man, so weak as deliberately to say a thing that so much needed an excuse, or qualification, to an audience, which, he ought in common prudence to have foreseen, would not give him time to make it? Let all who hear me judge whether taking liberties, like these, with Christ, and the Scriptures, tends either to the honour of Christianity, or of those who take them; and whether any book, that may be warrantably thus interpreted, is worth the reading.

Give me leave now to shew, that Christ not only took to himself the name of God, but actually averred there was no other God beside him, forbidding the worship of any other God, with the most dreadful denunciations of vengeance in case of disobedience.

Christ says, 'The Father judgeth no man, but hath given all judgment to the Son.' From hence we must conclude, that what I am going to cite from the twentieth and twenty-first of the Revelation, is said entirely of the Son, or Christ; 'I saw a great white throne,' saith the evangelist, 'and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened:—and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books.—And he that sat on the throne said unto me, It is done: I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He that overcometh,

shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.' Now it is plain, beyond all question, that he who thus appeared and spoke was the same with him, who, in the first chapter of this book, twice calls himself Alpha and Omega, and once the First and the Last, which two expressions differ not in signification. It is also as plain, that, in saying these things, he does but translate and quote what he had said of himself in Isa. xliv. 6, 'Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord ofhosts, I am the First, I am the Last, and beside me there is no God;' and ver. 8, 'Is there a god beside me? Yea, there is no god, I know not any.' It is worth observing, that, in the same passage of Isaiah, the First and the Last saith, among other things, not pertinent to our present purpose, that 'he will pour water on him that is thirsty;' and that, in the parallel passage from the Apocalypse, he saith, 'I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the river of life freely;' which may farther serve to demonstrate the congruity of the two places. Can there be stronger terms found, throughout the languages of men, than those in which Christ here denies the being of any other god but himself.

It hath appeared in this Discourse, if you have observed it, by a passage or two taken from the New Testament, and compared with the Old, that Jesus Christ is that one God, the God of Israel, who brought the Israelites out of Egypt, led them through the Red Sea and the Wilderness, established them in the Land of Promise, spoke to them by all the prophets; and set himself forth as the only, the universal, object of divine worship. I shall now proceed to a farther proof of this great point, in order, by that means, to shew that he hath denied the being, and forbid the worship, of any other god but himself.

I have already shewn you, that our blessed Saviour took to himself that incommunicable name of God, Jehovah, John viii. 58; that the Scribes and Pharisees, who heard him, understood by this, that he had called himself the true and only God; and that he left them, the multitude, and many of his own disciples, then present, in that opinion, without in the least offering to explain or qualify what he had said. Either, then, he was what I forbear to name, or

that only true God who appeared to Moses at the bush, and distinguished himself, by the peculiar name of Jehovah, from all other beings.

That this name was better fitted than any other to express the distinction mentioned, will appear to any one who knows it signifies I am, that is, Existence, or The Being; intimating, that God is the only absolute, eternal, self-existent Being; whereas all other beings are dependent, relative, derivative, and, in comparison of him, not deserving the name of being. The Jews of old held this name in such veneration, that they durst not pronounce it; and the ancient eastern paraphrasts and translators, instead of either writing down the name itself, or rendering it by another, usually put various words for it which signified no more than 'the name;' as much as to say, Here should stand the dreadful name, if we durst write or translate it. The Chaldaic Paraphrast almost every where, as Galatinus testifies, set the word *memar*, that is 'the name,' in the place of it. All the other names of God, as El, Elohim, Jah, Shaddai, Adonai, they pronounced freely; from this only they abstained. And this distinction they made, because the other names were either given sometimes, by the scriptural writers, to inferior beings, or did not so peculiarly express the one infinite self-existent Being.

Now here we must recollect what was fully proved from Scripture, in the Discourse on the Unity of God, that there is but one Jehovah; and that the one only God is that one Jehovah. It was there observed, that the proofs for this unity of Jehovah are negative and exclusive; so that the other passages, which seem to intimate two Jehovahs, but do by no means, directly or indirectly, affirm it, are to be explained by these, and not these by them. Indeed the aforesaid seeming intimation is easily accounted for by the personal distinction between the Father and the Son; inasmuch as Jehovah, signifying God, is applicable to both. By this we may understand that expression, Gen. xix. 'The Lord,' or Jehovah, 'rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord,' or Jehovah, 'out of heaven;' and that other, Zech. x. 12, 'I will strengthen them in Jehovah, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith Jehovah;' that is, Jehovah, or God the Son, rained fire from Jehovah, or God the Father; and Jehovah, or God the Father, saith,

I will strengthen them in Jehovah, or God the Son, and they shall walk about glorifying, as the Septuagint, and hoping, as the Syriac, in his name; which is literally true of us, who glory in the name of Christians, and hope in the name of Christ. Thus we see there is but one Jehovah; and that Jesus Christ is that Jehovah, or Lord. So he is every where called in the New Testament by that Greek word κυριος, from κυρω, I am, which the Septuagint always puts for Jehovah; so he styles himself, John xiii. 13, 'Ye call me Master, and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am.' So St. Thomas styles him, in the confession of his faith, 'My Lord, and my God;' John xx. 28. That, by the word Lord, applied in these, and so many other places, to Christ, we are not to understand that common title of masters, or princes, is every where plain at the first sight; nay, that it signifies the great, the only Lord, or Jehovah, is manifest from the second of the Epistle to the Philippians, where we are told, that, 'although he thought it not robbery to be equal with God,—he took on him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;' on account of which God the Father bestowed on him the sole government of that kingdom which he held in partnership before, highly extolling him, 'and giving him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord,' that is, the only Lord, or Jehovah, 'to the glory of God the Father.' That the word Lord is to be understood here in this high sense, appears from the import of the whole passage, which represents Christ exalted to the monarchy of the universe with two views; first, that the whole creation might adore him; and secondly, 'that every tongue might confess him to be the Lord.'

If, while the respect for this incommunicable name was at the highest, our Saviour assumed it to himself before an audience made up of disciples, and unconverted Jews, we must conclude he was that very God who revealed himself, and the law, to Moses, and who spoke by all the prophets. It is in vain to say he called himself at the bush, and was elsewhere called, an angel. We have already seen, that the word angel implies no particular nature, but only an office.

As such, it might be well applied to Christ, who was the angel or messenger of his Father, in all he did, and who therefore in that sense, and that only, is styled 'Messenger of the covenant,' Mal. iii. 9, 'whereof he was also the Mediator,' Heb. viii. 6, in which very Epistle he is more than once styled God. May not a son, who is of the same nature with his father, be nevertheless his messenger? Christ, then, having called himself by the name Jehovah, and being often so called by the writers of the Old Testament, and by those also of the New (for the word *curios*, there used, is put for Jehovah by the Septuagint, which the apostles, for the most part, quoted), we must believe in him as the God of Israel, who gave the law, the first moral commandment whereof is this, 'Thou shalt have none other gods before me;' that is, Thou shalt neither believe in, nor worship, any other god with me, nor in my sight; or, Thou shalt worship me, and me only; for the negative implies and contains in it the positive. But the commandment is worded negatively, because God knew his people were in much greater danger of falling into the worship of subordinate gods in conjunction with him, according to the custom of all the Gentile nations, who adored one supreme and many inferior gods, than of totally relinquishing his service.

Is Christ, then, who wrote these words with his own finger on the table of stone, who delivered them to his people, and, through them to all men, with such pomp and terror from mount Sinai, who denounces such dreadful judgments against the transgressors of this law; is he but a subordinate god? Is he but a deified creature? And, having so absolutely prohibited the worship of all other gods but himself, hath he actually forbid the worship of the one true, eternal, supreme God? Can a man be a Christian—can a man have common sense, and believe this? The Arians of old and the Semi-Arians of our own times, compelled by the citations concerning Christ in the New Testament from the Old, whereof I have given you but a specimen, have always acknowledged Christ to have been the God of Israel, who delivered the law; yet held him to be an inferior, a delegated god. But you see in what their shocking hypothesis terminates. This angel, this creature, this inferior god, forbids, absolutely, with dreadful threatenings, forbids, the worship of his Almighty

Master, of the true God, of his God! Horrible indeed! But these refining adversaries of the truth tell us, he spoke not in his own name, but in the name of him who sent him; and that the worship he demanded was not to terminate in him the representative, but in God his principal. How could he have so absolutely forbidden the belief or worship of all other gods, whether superior or inferior to himself, by words so totally excluding all shadow of representation, subordination, delegation, or even co-ordination? If he was a son only by creation and favour, how came he so positively to forbid the worship of his father? If he was a God only by delegation, and to be worshipped merely as the representative of the real and true God, why did he, instead of transmitting the worship he demanded, stop it, and centre it wholly in himself, by expressly prohibiting all other objects of worship, and consequently his great supreme constituent? On the contrary, why did not he, so ready on all occasions to express his duty and fidelity to the Father, as the Arians, ever watchful to turn those expressions to his dishonour, very well know; why did he not, I say, on this great occasion, when the object of all worship, all duty, all morality, was to be fixed, give an Arian preface to his commandments? Why did he not say, 'O Israelites, I am appointed to act between God and you; and, as the representative of God, in my own proper person to receive those sacrifices, devotions, and obedience, wherewith you are to honour him?' Or why this puzzling, this amusing subtlety, tending to the worship of a creature? Why did he not rather say, 'I, your fellow-creature, and your fellow-servant, am commissioned by the great Creator and Master of us all, to forbid you, under the severest penalties, the worship of any being but him?' This, surely, was necessary, if Christ was not God himself. How different was his conduct from this! Mark his awful words: 'I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me;' no concomitant, no subordinate, no delegated gods. There is but one God. I am that one God; and thou shalt worship me alone. Thus he speaks himself; and Moses, who speaks his words, delivers what he had received precisely to the same effect: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord [Jehovah].

It is, I know, objected here, that the worship prescribed in the first commandment is not appropriated to him who immediately spoke the law, that is, to an angel, but to him in whose name the angel spoke it. And it is insisted, that it was an angel, or angels, that spoke it, because St. Paul says, Gal. iii. 19, it 'was ordained by angels;' and argues, Heb. ii. 3, that the gospel is entitled to higher veneration than the law, inasmuch as the one was spoken by angels, whereas the other was spoken by the Lord himself.

And what then? Is not the Lord, in this very Epistle to the Hebrews, sufficiently distinguished from the angels who spoke the law, and from all other angels, by being set forth, chap. i. 6, as an object of worship to 'all the angels of God?' Now, is not all worship appropriated to the Lord by the first commandment? And is not Christ the Lord? Does he not take the name of Jehovah, or Lord, to himself? It cannot, surely, be inferred from this passage of Scripture, that he is only a representative; since the passage sets him forth as the principal, and even the objection owns it. If this Arian argument, therefore, does any thing, it only shews that none of the angels, angels I mean by nature, concerned in delivering the law was Christ, but that they were all his inferiors and substitutes; being clearly represented as such, and, as such, distinguished from him in the very place of Scripture referred to. Let no man, therefore, presume to say, because Moses speaks of an angel conducting the Israelites, and interfering at the burning bush, that this angel was Christ; for Christ, it is manifest, was the Lord, or Jehovah, himself, in whose name the law was delivered by the ministry of angels, and who, by that law, restrains all worship to himself. The truth is, had it not been for this argument of St. Paul, though intended for another purpose, it would not have been so easy as it is to prove, against the Arians, that Jehovah, and the angel at the bush, were distinct beings. That Christ was he who gave himself the name of Jehovah at the bush, is plain from John viii. 58. That there was an angel present at the bush, who formed the voice, and delivered the words, in the name of Jehovah, is also plain from Exod. iii. 2. and that this angel was not Christ, is as plain from Heb. ii. 2, 3. where the Lord is clearly distinguished from all the angels employed in the

delivery of the law. But, whatsoever part the angel is supposed to have acted at the bush, or in the delivery of the law, it is certain Jehovah speaks the ten commandments in his own person, and confines all worship to himself. Now, granting that the angel delivered these commandments to Moses, and even that he wrote them on the two tables of stone, against the express words of Scripture; Exod. xxxi. 18. yet all men must own they are the very words of Jehovah himself, as truly and properly as those which the prophets wrote, when they said, 'Thus saith the Lord.'

After all that hath been said, it may seem almost superfluous to insist, that Christ is set forth in Scripture as the true, the proper, the only object of adoration, he having, as was observed, appropriated all worship to himself by the first commandment. However, I will, for this purpose, just remind you of two or three passages. St. Paul, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, applies these words of the ninety-seventh Psalm to Christ: 'Let all the angels of God worship him.' If the angels worship him, surely we must; 'for to them and us there is but one God.' St. Paul tells us, in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians, that 'at the name of Jesus every knee must bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.' And Christ himself, as you may read, Rom. xiv. 11, compared with Isa. xlv. 22, 23, appropriates all adoration to himself: 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.' As not only we, but the whole creation, is in duty bound to adore our blessed Saviour, we accordingly find, Apoc. v. that when this Lamb of our salvation, who stood in the midst of the throne, had opened the book which none else was able to read, 'the four beasts, and the four-and-twenty elders that were about the throne, fell down before the Lamb,' and sung his praises in a hymn re-echoed by all the hosts of heaven, and continued, as represented already, from the second of the Epistle to the Philippians, by 'every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea, saying, Blessing, and honour, and

glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.'

Hence you see, that incommunicable worship, that glory which God will not give to another, is prescribed and given to Christ: and that it is the same, in kind and degree, with that which is paid to the Father, is evident; because Christ says, 'The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;' John v. 22, 23. and because, as you may perceive by the passage just cited from the Revelation, the worship paid 'unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb,' is one individual act of worship offered at the same instant and expressed in the same terms. The united practice of every creature, not only on earth, and under the earth, but even in heaven itself, round the throne, and before the face of God, is surely a sufficient comment, if they needed it, on all the assertions of our Saviour's divinity, hitherto quoted from holy Scripture. Here is practice, to put speculation out of question. Practice generally follows faith; but here it follows the beatific vision in heaven, and leads the way to our faith on earth, that there may be no possibility of mistaking. You see there can be no Arians, no Socinians, no subordinate worshippers, in heaven. There the angels, the archangels, the principalities, the powers, the dominions, the thrones, are all orthodox Christians; all 'honour the Son as they honour the Father,' in one united hymn, paid, without distinction, without subordination, equally to both. There they do not worship the Son only as the representative of the Father. The Father himself is visibly present, as well as the Son, and both on one throne receive the adoration of the whole universe.

I have now gone through with such proofs of our Saviour's divinity as the time would permit. And here let me ask you, what arguments on the other side are sufficient to make us doubt or deny this article of faith? If the Holy Ghost had said but once, 'Christ is God,' surely nothing but an equal authority, saying the contrary, should in reason, be allowed to shake our faith in his divinity. But where in the holy Scriptures is this flat contradicting proposition, 'Christ is not God,' to be found? Or in what other Bible are

we to look for it? Are our own reasonings, so apt on all occasions to deceive us, to serve instead of it? or are we to trust to consequences drawn, by our own fallible understandings, from passages that say no such thing in terms, but seem, by a long chain of subtle inferences, to point to it, against the positive testimony of one such plain affirmative, that needs no comment? Surely one proof of this nature ought to outweigh ten thousand deductions. But, if one ought not, will not so many repeated passages, all concurring to affirm the same thing, preponderate? Or, if even this will not do, you ought at least to be convinced by those places that prove the point by negatives; such as where Christ himself says, 'There is no God besides me;' 'Thou shalt have none other gods before me.' He who says Christ is the Word, and 'the Word is God,' says enough. But Christ says a great deal more, when he says these words: 'I am the First and the Last, and besides me there is no God.' What argument, that requires to be helped out by our own reasonings, can be set over against this in the balance of a sound judgment, already convinced that Christ is truth itself?

You may observe I have chosen to multiply plain proofs for our Saviour's divinity from Scripture, rather than to spend the time in accommodating to my purpose such as were less plain, by a precarious comment of my own; as also, that I have endeavoured to clear the point chiefly by quoting passages from the New Testament, repeating, or referring to, others in the Old, whereby every such proof acquires the force of two; and, besides, hath the immense advantage of an application and comment made by an interpreter who could not err.

While I was doing this, I observed, what never occurred to me before, that the strongest proofs, and those in the greatest number, nay, those in which Christ's dignity is carried highest, are conveyed in this way. And the reason why the apostles took that method, seems to be this: The unconverted Jews could not easily digest, either from their Master or them, the plain assertions of his divinity in terms of their own. To avoid this obstruction, the apostles chose to assert it in the words of the prophets, whom their readers implicitly believed, and highly reverenced; by this means delicately grafting this doctrine, otherwise so startling, on

the faith they had already received, and thereby at the same time strongly and clearly exhibiting the close connexion between the two dispensations. They shewed, by the miracles they wrought, that they were inspired; and consequently, had a right to be heard when they delivered themselves in words unheard before; and therefore they do frequently assert their Master's divinity in expressions not found among the prophets. But, if their miraculous powers ought to have given them credit on such occasions, they ought, for the same reason, to give weight to their comments, and applications of the prophets, inasmuch as it was evidently the same Spirit that both dictated and applied the prophecy. When, therefore, the apostles brought the authority of the prophets in aid of their own, they seemed to reason with a double force. Hence, perhaps, may be best explained what St. Peter says in the Second Epistle, after pleading a miracle; 'We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed.' Not that prophecy is a surer test of truth than a miracle, for it is but a miracle; but that the concurrence of both a prophecy and a miracle give stronger testimony than a miracle alone, because it carries with it the efficacy of two miracles; and, if there was a preconception in favour of the prophecy, this too must have its effect.

It cannot be denied, but that the writers of the Old Testament, being obliged perpetually to inculcate the worship of one only God on the minds of the Israelites, and to deter them from that of all false gods, are every where full, strong, and precise, on this subject, expressing the majesty of the one true God in great and glorious terms, and vilifying the false and pretended gods in such words and phrases as carry with them the utmost contempt. Here every thing appears in favour of the unity. Now, when the same Spirit that inspired the Old Testament, makes use, in dictating the New, of such passages therein, as set forth, with the utmost elevation of expression, the majesty of the one God, and applies them to Jesus Christ as that one God, surely a Christian can have no doubt of his divinity; for, certainly, whatever a pretended Christian may imagine he hath found out in the New Testament, there is but one God only proposed to our faith in the Old. But the writers of the New

not quoting often, very seldom indeed, by name, the reader, little versed in the Scriptures, for the greater part does not observe there is a quotation, when there really is; and, consequently, neither observes the full force of the proof, nor, I might add, does he see the strong and peremptory expressions, wherein the fulness of the Godhead is ascribed to his Saviour, for want of having recourse to the passage at large, from whence the citation is taken; but often so taken, as to leave the stronger expressions behind for a farther search, on having received some impressions of the truth.

I thought fit so far to do justice to this part of the apostolic wisdom, that they who hear me may not too suddenly take up opinions prejudicial to the doctrine I have been labouring to establish, till they have paid a proper deference to that precept of Christ: 'Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me.'

And now, blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

DISCOURSE VII.

THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY GHOST PROVED.

ST. JOHN XVI. 13.

—When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

HAVING, in a former Discourse, proved, that there is but one God, and in another, that Christ is God, I come now to prove, that the Holy Ghost also is God.

The words of my text represent him to us as God; for

how otherwise can he 'guide us into all truth,' nay, be the very 'Spirit of truth,' or truth itself? 1 John v. 6. How otherwise can he 'shew us things to come?' These surely are not the attributes or powers of a creature. This the opposers of his divinity will grant; but they will insist, at the same time, that these attributes and powers are not his own, but borrowed from the Father and the Son, and exercised by commission from both, inasmuch as Christ saith, 'He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he heareth, that shall he speak; he shall receive of mine; all things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you;' ver. 14, 15.

If the Spirit of God hath nothing of his own, why is he set forth, 1 Cor. xii. 11, 'as dividing his gifts to every one severally as he will?' If he knows nothing, but what he hears, or is told, why is he said, 2 Cor. ii. 10, 'to search all things, yea, the deep things of God?' Or why is it asked, Isa. xl. 13, 'Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him?'

There is only one way to reconcile these seeming opposites, which other parts of Scripture, brought on both sides, appear to set yet wider; but it is an easy, and the true one. As Christ, though God, acts as a Son, and a man, in subordination to his Father, without derogating from the coequal dignity of his nature; so the Holy Ghost, though God, pursuant to the divine economy of offices, distributes those gifts of knowledge, truth, sanctity, &c. which proceed, as he doth himself, originally from the Father and Son, and which therefore the Son calls his own; not because they do not as much belong to the Father and the Holy Ghost as to him, but because the Son hath purchased the use of them for the church by his blood. Now, this method, whereby Christ hath acquired the sole right of propriety in the church, and the use of such powers as are peculiar to the Holy Spirit, neither derogates from that copartnership of right which he and the Holy Spirit had before, nor from the divinity of their nature, wherewith it hath nothing to do. The church belongs to Christ, as its proprietor and governor; which gives him a right to the assistance of both the other persons, in their respective offices. Accordingly, the Father pardons and adopts all those whom Christ inter-

cedes for; and the Holy Ghost, in like manner, concurring, as our Paraclete, to the great work of redemption, hath 'prepared a tabernacle' for Christ; hath given him his unction; and hath contributed the miraculous and prophetic powers peculiar to him, as previously engaged and made over to the disposal of Christ, on account of his meritorious sufferings, stipulated for from the beginning, and in order to the accomplishment of that gracious scheme of mercy, to which the preparation of that tabernacle, the consecration of that unction, and the exercise of those high powers, are so necessary. Christ is, by right of purchase, the sole governor and monarch of the church, and consequently, by the same right, the proprietor of all things necessary to that government. So far therefore as the Holy Spirit is pleased to interfere in the administration, you see the divine polity requires he should act in subordination to the Father, who is the fountain, and to the Son, who is, in virtue of his acquest, the immediate administrator, of all power. He who is tolerably versed in the Scriptures, cannot but perceive, that this doctrine is sufficiently authenticated thereby; and therefore I shall not now waste the time in quotations on a subject rather explanatory, than probatory, of the point I have undertaken to establish. Give me leave only to observe to you, that all the passages of Scripture, wherein the character of the Holy Spirit seems to be set lower than the supposition of his divinity can comport with, may be easily reconciled to that supposition on the subordination of his office, thus explained; and that therefore it is highly absurd, if not wicked, to understand those passages of his nature, to which not one of them hath any relation, and in the teeth of many others, which give him the name, the style, the attributes, and the dignity, of God.

It may indeed be objected, that the same being cannot be, in any sense, superior or inferior to itself. This we own is true of a being wherein there is no personal distinction, and even of that being wherein there is, if the nature of that being only is considered. As my observation, however, on this head, turns on no supposed inequality of nature, but merely on a subordination of offices; and as, in making that observation, I presuppose the personal distinction in the Divine Nature; this objection cannot affect it;

for they that are naturally equal, may be employed in unequal offices. There are many passages of Scripture, that must be explained by this observation, if we do not mean to make it contradict itself. Any other way of interpreting those places will do the sacred writings as little honour, as it does him, who inspired their writers, and who, if he were not God, might possibly be deceived himself or deceive those who have delivered to us what he dictated to them. This, I trust in God, will fully appear, by the time I shall have finished the present Discourse.

It is observable, that the penmen of the holy Scriptures have neither so often, nor so directly and positively affirmed the divinity of the Holy Ghost, as of the Son. The reason of this their conduct seems to be obvious. The Son being man as well as God; and inasmuch as he hungered, thirsted, wept, and died a death seemingly the most dishonourable, to outward appearance a mere man; it was the more necessary to assert, and often inculcate, his divinity, in order to take away the reproach of the cross, which was 'to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;' 1 Cor. i. 23. But there was far less need of this in respect to the Holy Ghost, who having nothing of humanity, or of an inferior nature, in him, and being the very 'Spirit of God, who is a Spirit,' it was not so necessary to insist on his divinity. To say, he is God, would be much the same as to say, the Divine Spirit is God, or God is God, were it not that as he is personally distinguished from the Father and the Son, and acts in the church by commission from both, it was requisite he also should be exhibited to us in Scripture, as really and truly God, to prevent our taking him for a created spirit, whom we see in the exercise of powers peculiar to God alone. But, as I said, this was less necessary, than in respect to the Son. Accordingly, there is no comparison between the number of those who have questioned the divinity of the Son, and of those who have objected to that of the Holy Ghost. The former are by far the greater number, notwithstanding the greater variety of evidences, and those more direct and positive, against them. And the latter have, for the most part, rather endeavoured, with the Sabellians, to sink the personal distinction of the Holy Ghost, than, with the Macedonians, to refute his divinity.

The proofs, however, for this are sufficiently numerous and clear; and since the divinity of the Son, as a distinct person from the Father, hath been already demonstrated, there will be the less difficulty in admitting the full force of those proofs in regard to the third person of the Blessed Trinity; for, if the Divine Nature admits of one such distinction, it may, for ought the narrow reason of man can tell us to the contrary, admit of another. In this we can have no lights, no warrantable grounds to go on, but what the Scriptures afford us. It is, therefore, now time to see what they set forth on this subject.

That we may proceed with the greater regularity, let us examine, as briefly as we can, the scriptural proofs for the divinity of the Holy Ghost, under the following heads; to wit, his name, his attributes, his worship, his works or offices, and the divine style or title ascribed to him in the word of God.

And, first, As to his name; he is as properly and peculiarly called the Holy Spirit, and thereby distinguished, both in the Trinity, and from all other beings, as the first person is by the 'Father,' or the second by the names of the 'Son,' 'Word,' or 'Jesus Christ.' If then he is thus, by way of eminence and distinction, called holy, he must be God; 'for none is holy as the Lord;' 1 Sam. ii. 2. 'nor good,' which signifies the same thing, 'save one, that is, God;' Luke xviii. 19. Yet the third person is called 'good;' Psal. cxliii. 10. 'Thy Spirit is good.' With the same note of eminence and supremacy, is the word 'Spirit' ascribed to him, in the Scriptures, by way of contradistinction to all other spirits. Christ says, John iv. 24, 'God is a spirit;' and the Holy Ghost, we know, is every where called the 'Spirit of God;' nay, he is often called 'the Spirit,' absolutely, and without reference, as Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;' and, ver. 16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit,' &c. If, therefore, he is 'the Spirit,' if he is 'the very Spirit of God,' who is by essence and nature a Spirit, or rather, in the same sense of eminence and distinction, 'the Spirit,' then surely he is God.

Secondly, He is proved to be God, from the incommunicable attributes given him in Scripture. That glorious at-

tribute of God, his holiness, is, as we have already seen, the peculiar characteristic of his name, not only denoting his office, but his nature, as you may see, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 'Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost;' Matt. xii. 32, 'Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost,' &c. where the word 'holy' hath no relation to his office. He is said 'to be the Author and Giver of life;' Rom. viii. 11. St. John says, 'he is the truth;' 1 John v. 6. 'He foresees that which is to come;' 2 Pet. i. 21. Joel ii. 28. and no wonder, since omniscience is also ascribed to him; 'for he searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God;' 1 Cor. ii. 10. and that, as one who 'knows them of himself,' in the same manner 'as a man knoweth the things of a man;' ver. 11. This proves his divinity in the clearest manner; for, if he searches all things, he must know all things; because we cannot suppose he searches in vain; indeed the original word signifies to search with success, or to find out. And if he knows the deep and mysterious things of God, he is able to comprehend God, which none but God himself can do. Omnipresence, or immensity, is expressly attributed to him by the psalmist, Psal. cxxxix. 7, 8, 'Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.' He is likewise omnipotent; for he is called 'the power of the Highest;' Luke i. 35. And, to put it out of all question that he is God, he is expressly called 'the eternal Spirit;' Heb. ix. 14. Here it is worth observing, against the opposers of his personality, as well as divinity, that in this very sentence, which calls him 'the eternal Spirit,' he is distinguished personally both from the Father and the Son: the words are, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself, without spot, to God (the Father), purge your conscience from dead works,' &c. As he is 'the truth,' and is 'to guide us into all truth,' would he have adorned himself with these divine attributes, had he not known them to be his? Or, if he is but a creature, and they are his only by some secret, undiscovered imputation, how can it be said, 'he guides us into all truth,' since he thus directly leads us to the adoration of a being that is not God, to 'worship the creature as the Creator,' in plain contradiction to what he a

thousand times inculcates throughout both Testaments? How can a man make the Scriptures the rule of his faith, when he thinks thus slightly of their Author?

In the third place, He is proved to be God, from the divine worship prescribed and paid to him in the holy Scriptures. The apostles were commanded, Matt. xxviii. 19, 'to go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.' The sacrament of baptism, we are sensible, is a most solemn act of worship, done in the name, and by the authority, of God alone, wherein, at the same time that the new Christian is consecrated to him, the respective blessings of each person is invoked and conferred. Now, here the Holy Ghost appears in equal authority with both the Father and the Son, and is, by consequence, equally the object of that worship which is paid in this religious act; nay, so far as it is an act of invocation, he seems to be peculiarly addressed; because his descent on the person baptized immediately follows, as that which distinguishes the baptism of Christ from the baptism of John. In consequence of this initiation, we are to believe in him, and to pray to him for grace and peace, as well as to the first and second persons. Accordingly, St. Paul, 2 Cor. xiii. 14, prays distinctly to the three persons by name: 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.' It was for these and the like reasons, that the church, in every age, hath repeated hymns, and paid divine honours, to the Holy Ghost, as well as to the other persons of the blessed Trinity.

Fourthly, The Holy Ghost is most evidently proved to be God, by his works and offices, which carry with them so high a character in Scripture, and require such a plenitude of the divine attributes in the execution, as cannot be ascribed to any but the infinite Being, without a degree of absurdity inconsistent with common sense, and of wickedness unworthy of Christianity.

He is said to have his share in the creation of the world; Gen. i. 2, where we are told, 'the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters;' Job xxvi. 13, where it is said of God, 'that by his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens;' and, chap. xxxiii. 4, where Elihu says, 'The Spirit of God hath made me.'

If his divinity appears by his efficacious power in the works of nature, it demonstrates itself no less gloriously by his miraculous power over nature, and all her laws. Christ's birth, contrary to the course of nature, of a pure virgin, was effected by this power. 'The Holy Ghost,' saith the angel to Mary, 'shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.' Christ himself acknowledges his miracles to be the works of the Holy Ghost, Matt. xii. 28, 'If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.' And even that glorious miracle, the resurrection of Christ, at least of all men, is ascribed to him, Rom. viii. 11, 'If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.' And that he is not the instrument, qualified extraordinarily by the Father for these supernatural performances, as an angel, or a man, who may be enabled to do the like; but the primary agent acting by his own power, and of his own will, just as he thinks fit; you may be convinced, by considering what is said, 1 Cor. xii. 11, where you see he gave the first disciples their 'miraculous powers,' their 'gifts of wisdom,' of 'knowledge,' of 'healing,' of 'working miracles,' of 'prophesying,' of 'discerning spirits,' of 'speaking divers kinds of tongues;' 'and divided them to every man severally as he pleased.'

Pray now consider, that miracles performed, or, which is in effect the same thing, prophecies fulfilled, are the only credentials, whereby a revelation can be proved to come from God; and that the force of the proof depends solely on our firm persuasion, that none but God can see into futurity, or control the course of nature. This duly considered, when we see a miracle, we cannot help believing it was God who wrought it for our own conviction. In like manner, when we see an ancient prophecy verified by the event predicted, we must conclude that prophecy was primarily dictated by the divine foreknowledge. If then the miracles and prophecies recorded in Scripture, are there ascribed to the Holy Ghost, as their true, efficient, and primary source, it follows, that we have the same evidence for his divinity,

that we have for revelation itself. Now, it is nowhere in Scripture said, that he did these things by a power not his own, or that he was unable of himself to do them. On the contrary, there is enough said to convince us, that as he was the 'eternal,' the 'omniscient,' the 'omnipotent Spirit of God,' this power must have been naturally inherent in himself. We see the distribution was evidently at his own election, to withhold or give, to give what, and to whom, he pleased; which is too great a privilege to be trusted to the discretion of a creature, especially considering the immensity of the treasures he distributed, and the grandeur of the ends for which they were dispensed. But, had he been a creature, we shall presently see, it must have been utterly impossible for him to have gone through with this dispensation, although he had been accompanied by the highest conceivable plenitude both of the miraculous and prophetic powers; for who, but the omnipresent God, could have been on the spot with so many men, in so many distant places, at one and the same instant? But of this more hereafter.

What honour does Christ do the Holy Spirit, who was to testify of him after his leaving the world, when he attributes his very unction and mission to him! Isa. lxi. 1. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,' &c.; and chap. xlviii. 16, 'The Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me.' Agreeable to these passages of the prophet, St. Peter tells us, Acts x. 38, 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power.' Of this unction John the Baptist speaks in high terms; for he ascribes to it the divine wisdom and truth wherewith our Saviour spoke; John iii. 34, 'He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;' alluding, probably, to Isa. xi. 2, 'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord.' Can a Being, who thus assists God the Son with divine wisdom, and supernatural power, be himself a creature? Or, would God the Son owe his incarnation, his unction, his mission, his miraculous and prophetic gifts, to a creature? But it may be asked, Had he not these gifts and powers in himself, as the Son of God? And

it may be as easily answered, He had those powers and gifts as God; but, as the Son of Man, he received the exercise and dispensation of them from the Holy Ghost, to whom, we see, that dispensation peculiarly appertained. However, be this as it will, our not being able to account for things so infinitely mysterious, is no reason why we should not submit our understandings, and resign our faith, to scriptural declarations, so very plain in themselves. Infinite difficulties may be struck out from the clearest and most demonstrable points of knowledge; which, since we know them to be demonstrable, we are to consider only as difficulties in regard to our narrow capacities, but by no means in regard to a superior mind, to whom, for aught we know, they may be self-evident.

As the Holy Ghost proceeds, in an eternal and ineffable manner, from the Father and the Son, so he is sent by them to govern the church, which belongs to Christ; because he hath purchased it with his precious blood, and in the merits of his purchase hath acquired a right to all the mercies of his Father, and all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, necessary to the salvation of that church. We see, in the twelfth of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, how absolutely the Holy Spirit dispenses his miraculous gifts, and saving graces, to the church of Christ; and thereby are made sensible both of his divine authority and power; for none but God can confer such gifts; and none but God hath a right to confer them as he pleases. 'All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will;' ver. 11. Here we have a general and comprehensive view of the ecclesiastical government administered by the Holy Spirit. We see the same in particulars. He vouchsafes his presence to whom he pleases, in such manner and measure as he pleases; sometimes on the administration of baptism; sometimes on the imposition of hands; and sometimes, previous to both, on a mere conversion; Acts x. 44. 47. which shews, that he was not confined to the ordinances even of Christ's own institution. He 'forbids' the apostles 'to preach the word' in one country, Acts xvi. 6, 7. and sends them to another, Acts viii. 39, 40. He orders whom he thinks fit 'to be separated for the work of the ministry;' Acts xiii. 2. 'He creates the overseers,' or 'bishops, of the church;' Acts xx. 28. He abo-

lishes the Mosaic law or dispensation, although instituted by God;' Acts xv. 28. Was ever an authority like this committed to a creature? Or, is it possible for a creature to be present every where, in order to the discharge of such an office as this? To believe he may, is to confound the finite with the infinite, or to deify a creature, by giving him the essential attributes of God.

As the Holy Ghost is the governor, so he is also the instructor, of the church, 'I will,' saith God, by Isaiah, xliv. 3, 'pour out my Spirit upon thy seed;' and, by Joel, ii. 28, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,' &c. St. Paul, Ephes. i. 17, 18, prays, 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto his disciples the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' It was the Holy Spirit that dictated both the Testaments, insomuch that the 'inspiration,' by which the sacred penmen both spoke and wrote, hath its very name from his. When the prophets preface what they are going to say, with, 'Thus saith the Lord,' or, 'Thus saith God,' do they not quote him who spoke to them, or inspired them? And is not our faith, in regard to this inspiration, rightly called a divine faith? But surely, if it were founded only on the dictates of a creature, it could not be called originally divine. If the Holy Ghost, who gave the Scriptures, is a creature; to make our faith divine, that is, to make it a faith in God, the Holy Ghost himself must have been inspired by God. But what part of revelation authorizes such absurdity and blasphemy as this? Behold to what an issue the tenets of our adversaries must lead them!

By what hath been said, you see how evidently the Holy Ghost appears to be God, from his extraordinary works and offices. You will see the same no less clearly in his ordinary offices of regeneration and sanctification. That it is his immediate office to regenerate, is fully proved by the words of our Saviour, John iii. 3. 5, 6, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again of water,

and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' St. Paul tells us, 1 Cor. vi. 10, 11, that 'such sinners,' as he had enumerated, 'should not inherit the kingdom of God;' that some of those to whom he was writing, had been such; but that they were 'then sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' I need not multiply passages of Scripture in support of a point so obvious to every reader. It will be more to our purpose to consider a little what the new birth or regeneration is, that we may the better judge, whether it requires the immediate interposition of God, or may be effected by a creature.

The new birth then consists in repentance, faith, and charity. I need not quote the Scriptures to satisfy you, that whosoever wants these graces, is what is there called an 'old' or 'unregenerate man;' and that whosoever hath them, is, what is styled in the sacred language, a 'new man,' or, a 'new creature.' If it is then the Holy Spirit that regenerates us, it is he that gives us these graces. We may surely say of ourselves, as St. Paul did of himself, and his colleagues, 2 Cor. iii. 5, 'that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God;' and should be as ready to acknowledge it the gift of God's Holy Spirit, if we are become new creatures. We see it was he who changed the disciples, mentioned 1 Cor. vi. 11, from the vilest to the best of men. We see, Titus iii. 3. 5, that 'we, who were sometimes foolish, deceived, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another, are now, according to his mercy, saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' We see, 1 Cor. xii. 3, 'No man can say, Jesus is the Lord,' that is, can believe, 'but by the Holy Ghost,' who is called 'the Giver of faith,' ver. 9, and the 'Spirit of faith,' 2 Cor. iv. 13. We see, that 'the fruit of this Spirit is love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, towards men,' Gal. v. 22, 23; and, 'that by the same Spirit, the love of God' also 'is shed abroad in our hearts,' Rom. v. 5. And, as the resurrection of our Saviour is elsewhere ascribed to the Spirit, we may see, 1 Pet i. 21, 22, that we are beholden to him for all these

three graces, which concur in the new birth; 'God raised him [Christ] from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls, in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.'

Can this now be the work of any but God? Can a creature make a creature? Or, is the new creature a work less demonstrative of God's goodness and power, than the old? Must not he who performs this office search and know the heart? Must he not be able to make what impressions he pleases, both on our understandings and affections, howsoever hard and averse the one, or howsoever dark and prejudiced the other, may be? If he does this throughout the world at once, shall we not be forced to ascribe ubiquity to him? But why forced to do it by a necessary deduction, when the psalmist hath already done it in express terms? Psal. cxxxix. 7, 8. We know, that, through the faith and repentance given us by the Holy Ghost, the merits of our Redeemer are applied to us, and our sins washed away in his blood. We know also, that, being thus 'purified from sin, and sprinkled with the blood of Christ Jesus, we have grace and peace multiplied unto us, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience,' 1 Pet. i. 2. If then we are regenerated, if we are pardoned, if we are sanctified, if we are strengthened, and established in true holiness, we must be justified, we must be saved. And to whom are we indebted for all this? No doubt, to the mercy of the Father, to the merits of the Son, and no less to the grace and assistance of the Holy Spirit; without which it would be impossible for us to keep the covenant made by the Son, between the Father and us; without which therefore we should be in a far worse state, than if Christ had never died for us, or we had never been baptized into his death. Is it possible for any man, who is sanctified, and made holy, himself, to believe, that he derives his holiness from his own strength, or from that of any other creature? No; the truly holy see in the word of God, and feel in themselves, the glorious source of spiritual light and warmth, from whence this reviving beam of joy, this principle of life, proceeds. It is with them a primary article of faith to believe, that, as God only is ab-

solutely and originally holy, so he only can bestow any degree of it on his creatures; and that therefore the Holy Spirit, who hath begun or perfected it in them, is really and truly God. Their reason is shocked at the thoughts of having greater obligations to a creature, than to God; and they cannot but be sensible, it had been far better for them never to have been, than not to have been reclaimed and regenerated; because, without their second creation, the first must have put them unavoidably in the way of everlasting misery; whereas, by the second, an entrance into eternal life and glory is laid open to them. Men or angels, they know, may be ministers and instruments in the work of their reformation; but they can never believe God would only have made them, and left it to a creature to save them, to a creature acting voluntarily, and consequently claiming to himself the sole merit of all he did; observe, I say voluntarily, and I mean it in the highest sense of the word; for it is in that the Scriptures represent the Holy Ghost as acting; and therefore, I hope, no one will presume to say he acted by compulsion, or under fear of punishment, in case he had done otherwise; yet we know it is by the first that all instruments, and under the last that all ministers or delegates, do act, or rather are acted. Blessed be that gracious and holy Spirit, who hath given us grace to believe, that, as the 'Father, of his own will, begat us with the word of truth,' James i. 18, and the Son 'laid down his life for us of himself,' John x. 18; so the Holy Ghost, freely, and from the abundance of his love, is 'grieved at our sins,' Eph. iv. 30; 'maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered,' Rom. viii. 26; 'and distributes his glorious gifts, and saving graces, among us, as he will,' 1 Cor. xii. 11. And let others, who believe him to be a creature, denying his grace, and trusting to their own strength, consider a little better than they have yet done, what their belief leads to. If he is a creature, he must be fallible; and then, how are we sure the Scriptures, which he hath dictated, are true? He must be accountable, and therefore may be judged, and, possibly, punished; than which, I will be bold to say, no one proposition, conceivable by the mind, or utterable by the tongue, of man, can be more repugnant to the faith of a Christian, or wound his ears with a deeper horror.

Let us now, in the last place, consider some of those Scriptures, wherein his divine style and title of 'the Holy Spirit' are more clearly expressed, although his office is at the same time intimated; or, wherein, the office being passed over in silence, his nature only, with the proper appellations of that nature, is plainly represented.

But, before I proceed to this, it will be proper to remark here, that the demi-Christians frequently call on us for a direct and express proposition, asserting the divinity of the third person. That they deal unfairly in this, we may be convinced by two substantial reasons; first, because the same men, in all other things, are ready to give as full an assent to necessary consequences and implications, when they are, in sense and effect, tantamount, as to direct and positive propositions; and, secondly, because, although the divinity of our Saviour is often asserted in such propositions, they will not be concluded by them, but fly to forced interpretations of those propositions; and, having, by this expedient, as they think, somewhat lessened their cogency, set up consequences of their own drawing, from other parts of Scripture, against them. Can they, however, assign us a single proposition, in which the divinity of the Holy Spirit is directly and positively denied? Are they not forced to support their side of this argument by consequences and implications only, and those miserably extorted from Scripture, although, considering the force of our proofs, they seem to stand in need, at least, of one decisive assertion? No conduct can be more disingenuous than this, nor more fully prove, that their cause is bad, and the ends they pursue in defending it worse; for it is evident, from what hath been remarked, that, even in this most sacred inquiry, they do not so much seek for truth, as for the credit of a triumph, acquired, not by the merits, but by the management, of the debate.

There are several passages of Scripture, in which the office of the Holy Ghost is intimated, and, at the same time, his divinity asserted. We are told, 1 Cor. xii. 4—6, 'that there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; diversities of administrations, but the same Lord;' and that there 'are also diversities of operations, but that it is the same God which worketh all in all.' Here the word God is given both

to the Holy Spirit, and to Christ; for although the gifts of the Spirit are distinguished from the administrations of the Lord, and both from the operations of the Father, yet it is God that worketh all the gifts, the administrations, the operations, in all Christians. The offices are distinctly attributed to the respective persons, but it is God that performs them all. It is God, therefore, that confers the diversities of gifts; and he is, as to that operation, distinguished by his personal name of Spirit. Nay, to make the point still clearer, the working of miracles, the speaking divers kinds of tongues, which are properly operations, are immediately ascribed to the Spirit, ver. 10. And, to put the matter out of all doubt, the very thing that is said of God, ver. 6, 'It is the same God which worketh all in all,' is said of the Spirit, ver. 11, 'All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit.' But our adversaries will object here, that, by God, ver. 6, is to be understood the Father only. We grant the Father is to be understood by it, but not only; because that would infer a flat contradiction to other members of the passage, and most directly to the verse itself; for it is evident, that, while the Spirit bestows the gifts, and the Son exercises the administrations, it is God who worketh all in all; nay, that all these, as well operations as gifts, are immediately 'wrought by one and the self-same Spirit,' who disposes of them according to his own uncontrollable will and pleasure, and who is therefore God. The strong analogy, or rather sameness of expression, between the eleventh verse of this chapter, and the thirteenth of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, 'It is God that worketh in you, both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure;' together with this consideration, that, of the three persons, it is the Holy Spirit, who, by his office, is properly said to dwell and work in us; induces me to believe this latter passage is to be understood of him; and the rather, because what he is here said to do, namely, to work on our wills, and govern our actions, is so peculiarly a part, or rather now the main branch and end of his office, that it cannot, without great confusion, be ascribed either to the Father, or the Son.

That it was the Holy Ghost who inspired all the penmen of both Testaments, we are assured in a hundred places. I will not detain you with particular proofs of this. Take it

in general, as St. Peter expresses it, 2 Pet. i. 21; 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' Now, that the Holy Ghost was this very God, by whom they were moved, and spake, is as clear as the light. That which is called 'the word of God,' Eph. vi. 17, is there also called 'the sword of the Spirit.' These dictates of the Holy Spirit are called, 'in truth, the word of God,' 1 Thess. ii. 13. This inspirer of all Scripture is expressly called God, 2 Tim. iii. 16; 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.' Zacharias, who was himself filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied, and said, Luke i. 68—70, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel! for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.' Behold how he styles him who spake by the prophets, 'the Lord God of Israel.' Hear also St. Paul calling him by his personal name, in reference to his inspiring Isaiah, 'Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaias the prophet,' Acts xxviii. 25. Then listen to what Isaiah, chap. vi. 8, calls him in that very place which St. Paul here repeats, 'I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Go and tell this people,' &c. as St. Paul recites his words. I must observe to you, that the word Lord, here applied to the Holy Ghost, is put for Adonai, in the original; a name given to God a hundred and thirty-four times in the Old Testament, as the Masoreths have observed. The objection, that this name is sometimes given to creatures, is of no weight; for the prophet, in the same passage, ver. 5, calls him, whose voice he heard, 'the Lord [Jehovah] of hosts.' He is also called both the 'Spirit of God,' and God himself, Num. xxiv. 2. 4; 'Balaam lift up his eyes—and the Spirit of God came upon him. And he took up his parable, and said,—He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty.'

God promised, Isa. xliv. 3, 'to pour out his Spirit upon the seed of Jacob;' and, Joel ii. 28, 'to pour out his Spirit upon all flesh.' Pursuant hereunto, our Saviour, John xvi. 7, and Acts i. 5, promises to send 'the Holy Ghost on his disciples.' Accordingly, Acts ii. 2—4, this promise was performed, and 'they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.' This glorious gift, whereby God communicates himself to

man, and makes his abode in the soul, was not restrained to the apostles; all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, agreeably to the prophecy of Joel, received it, and manifested the fruits of it, either miraculously, in the work of the ministry, or morally, in newness of life and conversation. It is true, Christ hath promised, John xiv. 23, 'that both the Father and he will make their abode with those who love Christ;' but it is easily seen, that Christ speaks concerning the gift or indwelling of the Holy Spirit, whereby, as he was the same God with them, they were truly said to dwell where he dwelt. He speaks in the very same manner, ver. 9, to Philip, who desired to see the Father, 'Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.' He is, therefore, to be understood as promising the presence both of the Father and himself, when he promises that of the Holy Spirit, in these words, ver. 16, 17, 'I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter [another personally, but not essentially], who dwelleth with you, and shall be in you,' who, ver. 26, 'shall teach you all things;' which verifies the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, quoted by our blessed Saviour, John vi. 45; 'They shall be all taught of God;' and at the same time, expressly proves the divinity of their teacher.

This argument goes yet farther, and brings forth another evident proof of his divinity. St. Paul, attentive to this inhabitation of the Holy Ghost, infers from it, that every believer is the temple of God. 'Know you not,' saith he, 1 Cor. iii. 16, 'that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? Know you not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?' chap. vi. 19. That which is called the temple of God in the one place, is, you see, called the temple of the Holy Ghost in the other; and for the one only reason, because the Holy Ghost is in it. Surely no inhabitation, but that of a divinity, can make a temple; a temple not to be defiled without the wrath of God, to whom it is dedicated, and the destruction of him who defiles it; 1 Cor. iii. 17. But, lest any blasphemer of the Holy Ghost should say, he makes us the temples of God, only by representing God in us, and ministerially consecrating us to his service, see what the same

apostle says, 2 Cor. vi. 16, 'Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people;' and, ver. 18, 'I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.' Observe, I beseech you, that the Holy Ghost, who in the former passages, was said to dwell in us, and thereby to make us his temple, is here again said to dwell in us, to walk in us, to make us his temple; and is called, by the apostle, the 'living God,' and by himself the 'Lord Almighty;' that is, the Jehovah, who appeared to Moses, who gave the law, who inspired the prophets; for it is evident, the apostle here quotes, and directly applies to the Spirit, two passages; the first, Levit. xxvi. 12, 'I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people;' the second, Jer. xxxi. 9, 'I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born;' wherein the one only God, the Lord, or Jehovah, speaks. This seems sufficient of itself, to clear the point; but the tracing this argument from the indwelling of God will carry us still farther. If the Holy Ghost is he of the Divine Persons who dwells in us, and, being the Lord our God, makes us his temple, then he is the same who thus expresses himself, Isa. lvii. 15. 'Thus saith the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' Observe here both his peculiar name Holy, and also his peculiar office of 'dwelling with us,' in order to revive the humble and comfort the contrite. St. John, first Epistle, iii. 24, may serve to finish and ascertain this application of the passage from Isaiah; not that he quotes it, but by saying the same thing. 'Hereby we know that he (that is God, as the context evidently shews) abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.' By what means is it, that we know God dwelleth in us? The apostle tells us, it is by the evidence we have of the Spirit given to us, and residing within us. The indwelling of the Spirit can no otherwise be a sure proof of the indwelling of God, but on some previous proof, or firm belief, that the Spirit is really God. It is easy to see, if we take in the three foregoing verses, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,

are here personally distinguished; and that, though the First Person only is expressly called God, yet the Third is, by necessary consequence, called God also; for he alone of the Three is that Person who can properly be said to dwell or abide in us. The apostle's argument, expressed at large, is plainly this. We know the Holy Ghost abideth in us, and therefore we know God abideth in us; because we know the Holy Ghost is God.

If the Scriptures, while they intimated the office of the Holy Ghost, which hath somewhat of subordination in it, have, nevertheless, so strongly set forth his divinity, we may expect to find them yet more positive in this great point, when they speak purely of himself, and not of his offices. Three or four passages will shew they actually do.

Moses says, Exod. xxxiv. 34, 'That when he went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off until he came out. Now, St. Paul, having quoted Moses by name, saith, 2 Cor. iii. 15—17. 'That even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now, the Lord is that Spirit,' that very Spirit, 'whose ministration,' he says, 'is glorious,' ver. 8; and whom, that he may not be thought to mean the spirit in contradistinction to the letter, he calls, ver. 17, 'the Spirit of the Lord.' If then 'the Lord' is 'that Spirit,' 'that Spirit' must be 'the Lord.' What Lord? No doubt, Jehovah, whom Moses went to address, as he expressly tells us, 'when he took off the veil.' The Spirit, therefore, if we may believe himself, speaking by Moses and St. Paul, is the one only God. 'For who is God, save the Lord?' Psal. xviii. 31. 'Thus saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts—Besides me there is no God,' Isa. xliv. 6.

The words of St. Peter to Ananias, Acts v. 3, 4, always brought to prove the divinity of the Holy Ghost, are not indeed brought in vain; for nothing can be more clear and convincing. 'Why hath Satan,' saith the apostle, 'filled thine heart, to lie to the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.' This humble and faithful apostle took care always, when he wrought a miracle, to put aside the admiration of the beholders from himself, and to fix it on him, to whom he was but an instrument in the performance. When he restored the lame man, and observed

the people flocking about him, and filled with wonder, he said, 'Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? Or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?' Acts iii. 12. Here, in like manner, when the dreadful punishment of Ananias was about to follow his words, he puts himself and his brethren quite out of the question, and speaks of them as no way concerned in the business, which he represents as transacted between the all-knowing God only on the one side, and Ananias on the other, without the least intervention of a third party. His meaning cannot be rationally taken in any other light; and, therefore, we may thus exactly paraphrase his words. 'You cannot but be convinced, O Ananias, by the variety of languages we illiterate men can speak, and the miracles which persons so impotent in themselves, as we are, can perform, that the Holy Ghost is with us. How comes it to pass then, that the devil should have prevailed on you to lie, not to us, who are nothing in an affair of this nature, but to the Holy Ghost, who, you see, is with us, and who, you know, or ought to know, is God?' This is a true, an honest representation of the apostle's meaning, whose words are so clear, that had not our adversaries attempted, by a violent strain on the words, to confound the sense of St. Peter, I should have been ashamed to give another dress to expressions, which strike the understanding sufficiently with their own native light. These bold and artful interpreters tell us, St. Peter spoke of the Holy Ghost as the representative of God, and that therefore lying to him, was lying to God, in the same sense as, 'He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God,' 1 Thess. iv. 8. This bishop Pearson hath answered incomparably well: 'If, says he, the apostles would have aggravated the sin of Ananias with the full propriety and iniquity, in the sense of these expositors, he must have said, Thou hast not lied unto men, nor unto the Spirit of God, but unto God.'

David, with his last breath, 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3, in plain, positive, and direct terms, set forth the divinity of the Holy Ghost: 'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, the God of Israel said.' Surely, if nothing else can do it, this may satisfy our adversaries, who are so ready to ask us for a plain and positive proof on our side, while they give us none on

their own, but deductions and implications, haughtily expecting to pass them on us for convincing arguments, although nothing ever invented by man can be more disingenuous or perverse. Blame me not, my brethren, for this and the like instances of warmth. I have always thought, that to be cool and indifferent in a case of this nature, and to let practices so base, so unbecoming the profession of Christianity, go unstigmatized, is to betray its cause, and to sink the value of truth, like sceptics, in a promiscuous disregard for that and falsehood, as if it were no great matter, whether the one or the other were preferred.

The last proof I shall offer for the divinity of the Holy Spirit, is found in the twelfth chapter of the gospel according to St. Matthew, where our Saviour, on hearing those miracles, which he had wrought 'by the Spirit of God,' ver. 28, ascribed through malice, directly in the teeth of conviction, to the devil, says, ver. 31, 32, 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come. God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved;' John iii. 17. It was peculiarly the office of the Son to suffer, that he might save; and therefore forgiveness of injuries, although ever so cruel, made a necessary part of his amiable character. But as it is the office of the Holy Ghost to dictate the truth, and fully evidence the same by miracles, that all may believe, so it is an awful part of that office 'to convince the world of sin because they believe not in Christ,' John xvi. 8, 9. He is the giver of light and grace; but if they are despised, and thereby 'despite is done to him, what then remains, but that 'fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries?' Heb. x. 27.

I have given you this short, but clear, view of the unpardonable sin, that you may the better perceive the force of the proof contained in it for the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The two great aggravations of this sin are, first, that it is a wilful, a malicious, and contemptuous, offence against light; and secondly, that it sets the devil in the

place of God. So far as it is a malicious offence against light, it is an immediate insult upon God, who is light, and who, in the office of our illumination, affording us a plentiful and irresistible light by such wisdom as none but he could utter, and such miracles as none but he could work, is, at one and the same time, acknowledged by the conviction of conscience, and blasphemed by the pride and malice of the tongue. You cannot but be sensible, this aggravation of the sin derives its very essence from this consideration, that God is the immediate object of it; for no creature could give that miraculous evidence, which is thereby resisted and despised. And so far as this sin sets the devil in the place of God, it carries with it a degree of wickedness peculiar to itself, and far exceeding the heinousness of all other sins. But this is not all; while it gives the honour of God's most holy truths, revealed for the reformation of mankind, and of his glorious miracles, wrought for their relief and cure, to the devil, it ascribes to God the infamy of an opposition to so good a work, and consequently puts him in the place of the devil. The inconceivable blackness of this blasphemy, we see, consists in calling him, who performed the miracles, that is, the Spirit of God, a devil. Now, suppose him but a creature, and the sin, you perceive, immediately discharged of all its diabolical rebellion and presumption, dwindles to the size of other sins. Were it possible to commit a sin of the same nature against the Father, or the Son, I confess it would be equally unpardonable; because each is God. But, considering the part the Holy Ghost had to act, which was to dictate the doctrines of our religion, to work the miracles in evidence of those doctrines, and inwardly urge the force of the one, and the excellency of the other, both on the understanding and heart, it seems impossible the divinity could be equally vilified by any resistance given to the person of the Father, or the Son, who throughout the whole dispensation, whenever the minds of men were to be wrought on, acted by the intervention of the Holy Spirit. To him therefore, directly, immediately, was this blasphemous insult offered, which could not be offered to any other, and that by men, who either knew him, or by our Saviour's supposition, had sufficient reason for knowing him, to be God.

Far be it from me to say, that any man, at this distance of time from what was then done, either is, or can be, guilty of this horrible sin. But this I will be bold to say, that a very high degree of pride, of self-sufficiency, and of presumption, in resisting the evidences of divine truth, which the Spirit of God still affords, partakes in the nature of that sin, and approaches nearer to its utmost guilt, in proportion to the measure of those infernal qualities, as well as to the degrees of sense and knowledge, wherewith they happen to be accompanied. This may be truly said of every attack on the truths conveyed to us in those sacred writings whereof the Holy Spirit is author, but of none more truly, of none so immediately, as of those made on the divinity of his person, and the efficacy, I should rather say, the reality, of his grace. That presumption at large is the worst disposition the heart of man can be cursed with, we may learn of David: 'Keep back thy servant,' says that royal prophet, 'from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, then shall I be innocent from the great transgression:' Psal. xix. 13, for which no sacrifice was allowed in the law. But of all kinds or degrees of presumption, there is none so horrible in itself, or so pernicious in its effects, as that species of presumption, which will not suffer God to speak for himself, nor call himself God; but sets up to prompt him with its own detestable conceits. That in what I have this day delivered, I have not incurred the guilt of this frightful crime, I can honestly and confidently appeal to my own heart; and the Scriptures I have quoted will, I hope, satisfy those who hear me, that I have not laboured the point without reason. As to what our adversaries will be able to offer to God, or their own consciences, in justification of their dealings with his word, let them look to it. But I yet can see no other fruits of what they have done, than a growing contempt for the authority of the Scriptures, and a proportionable indifference to their blessed author.

May God, of his infinite goodness, be pleased, by his divine grace, notwithstanding the contempt in which it is held by many, to remedy this greatest of evils, for the sake of Christ Jesus, our blessed Saviour! Amen.

DISCOURSE VIII.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY VINDICATED.

JOB XI. 7.

Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

HAVING formerly proved, that there is but one God, and that no new God can be produced by adoption, by generation, by creation, or delegation; and having also proved, that Christ and the Holy Ghost are each of them, that one God; what now is left to be done by us as Christians, but to believe what God hath told us concerning himself? Is there any room left for our own speculations on the awful subject of the Trinity? God alone knows himself; and we neither know, nor can know, any thing of him, but what he hath been pleased to reveal. No man knows the Father, but the Son; nor can any man impart to us that share of this knowledge we are capable of, but the Son. Hear his own words, Matt. xi. 27, 'No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' He must be infinite, who perfectly knows the Infinite. Christ alone is equal to this. 'As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father,' John x. 15. For this reason he saith, John xvii. 25, 'O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee.' Well therefore might Zophar say to Job, in the words of my text, 'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.'

From hence a reasonable, a modest, a pious, man would conclude that God is incomprehensible to our minds; and that we cannot go a hair's breadth farther in the knowledge of him, than he is pleased to lead us by the light of reve-

lation. Yet, unhappily, the mind of man, proud, petulant, and distempered, even to madness, with its own conceit, is for going farther, and putting its counter-questions to those of Zophar. 'How can these things be?' How can it be true, that there is but one God, and yet true, that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost God? O infinitely incomprehensible and awful Being! impute it not to us for a crime, if we presume 'to answer these men according to their folly.' He, who asks such questions, asks them not of men, but of God; and if he believes the Scriptures to be the word of God, is impious; if he does not, he hath no right to be answered under this head of inquiry, but must be sent back to this other question, Are the Scriptures the word of God? If God, as I have clearly proved to every Christian, hath affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity, then he, who demands a reason for the consistency or truth of that doctrine, demands it of God; and will not believe it though God says it, till God shall give him a reason; whereas, sure I am, it is reason sufficient, that God hath said it. And that he hath often, in the strongest terms, said it, I have sufficiently shewn in the four preceding discourses; so that I insist, if these men are still to debate the point, it must be with God. If they have presumption enough for this undertaking (and what is it they cannot presume to do?) 'Let them bring forth their strong reasons,' and God shall 'answer them out of the whirlwind; Who are these that darken counsel by words without knowledge?' and will send them to his works, to try the strength and stretch of their talents on them, before he admits them to a speculation on himself.

But if we must engage in this impious controversy, let those answer for it, that drag us into it; for we cannot be silent when the honour of our Redeemer and Comforter is called in question.

Have the Sabellians, the Macedonians, the Arians, the Semi-arians, found out a middle point of inquiry between these two, Whether the Scriptures are the word of God, and whether the doctrine of the Trinity, as set forth in the Athanasian creed, is a true doctrine? For my part, I think it impossible. If the Scriptures were dictated by God himself, this doctrine must be true; for those Scriptures, as I have

fully shewn, set it forth in clear and strong terms; nay, in such a multitude and variety of terms, as leaves no other possible way of evading the doctrine, but by denying the Scriptures.

But our Anti-trinitarian adversaries think they have found out a middle question, which is this, Whether the Scriptures alleged for this doctrine are rightly understood and applied by us who hold it. Let the Scriptures speak for themselves, in God's name. I have cited them as naked and free from commentaries of my own, as the necessity of shewing why I cited them would permit. The truth is, I think they need none; nor should we ever attempt to give them any, had we not the mortification to see them handled by our adversaries with a freedom so disingenuous, and even contemptuous, that we should ill answer for our charge of so sacred a deposit, did we not endeavour to clear it of the false colours, wherewith they labour to daub it.

The Sabellians allowed the divinity, but denied the personality, of the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Arians and Semi-arians allowed their personality, but denied their divinity, as the Macedonians did that of the Holy Ghost in particular. Of our modern Anti-trinitarians, some side with the Arians, some with the Semi-arians; but the greater number of them are Socinians, who utterly deny the divinity of Christ, and either join with the Sabellians in sinking the personality of the Holy Ghost, or with the Macedonians in denying his divinity; which latter proceeding seems at present to prevail; though the former was that which their leaders generally leaned most to. They all in common hold a Trinity, and give the name, style, and worship of God, to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; but deny that either of them is truly and really God, insisting that either is God only by the appointment of the one true God. Hence the amazing distinctions of 'self-existent, self-originated, eternal,' God, in opposition to those supposed created and delegated gods. Most astonishing! have we more gods than one? Have we one self-existent, and two other derivative gods? Gods dependant on one another for their very being? Have we one eternal, and two new or temporary gods? And is this horrible system of Polytheism to be fathered on the Scriptures? No, no; it is derived from the enormous pre-

sumption of men, who would be wiser than God; but who, however pretending infinite veneration for his words, would give these words a meaning wholly opposite to their natural import, in order to screw them to their own impious hypothesis. When the Scriptures say, 'The Word was God,' they must not mean that he was truly God. When they call the Holy Ghost 'The eternal Spirit,' they must not mean that he was from all eternity; for these men will have him to be a creature produced in time. Thus the express passages of Scripture must be explained away; or so enfeebled by an artful, an arbitrary exposition, that consequences of their own drawing, or of their own forcing, from other passages of Scripture, neither very clear, nor pertinent, may be set up against them. How would a Lipsius, or a Bentley, maul these expositors, if he caught them chicaning in this manner with a place in Livy or Horace! If any man apprehends I wrong them, let him look into Waterland's Queries, or Lessie's Socinian Controversy; after which, I will venture to say, if he is an honest man, he will find in his heart more indignation against their practices, than I shall help him to express.

As to those, who sink the personality of the Son and the Holy Ghost in the attributes of God, or mere modes of acting, there are now so few of them in the world, and the heretics with whom we have to do, being much apter to assign them a distinction of nature, than to deny them that of persons, we shall, for proof of this personality, only refer you to the baptism of our Saviour, Matt. iii. 16, 17; where the three Persons are clearly distinguished to the senses; the Father, by a voice from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son;' the Son, by going 'visibly out of the water;' and the Spirit of God, by 'descending like a dove, and lighting on him.' This distinction is also evident from John xiv. 16, 17. 26, where Christ saith, 'I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter—even the Spirit of truth, whom the Father will send in my name.' No actions can more fully demonstrate a personal distinction, than these which exhibit 'Christ praying to the Father, and the Father,' at his request, 'sending the Holy Ghost.' How does it reflect on the understanding of man, that the truth, in this plain particular, should be attacked on the two opposite sides! that some should find but one person in these transactions, while others

find three beings in them! But both these errors proceed from a wrong construction of other parts of Scripture, tinctured with the self-sufficient dependence of conceited men on their own understandings. The Sabellians, seeing Christ, and the Holy Ghost so often set forth, each as God, in expressions so clear, as if no other person were God but himself; in order to preserve the unity, destroyed the personality; and all this purely because their reason must be superior to Scripture, as if it could so far comprehend God, as to see there could be no personal distinction in him. The Arians, &c. on the other side, seeing Christ and the Holy Ghost set forth, each as God, but spoken of as acting in subordination to the Father, must have one supreme, and two created gods, merely because their own reason, or rather conceit, could not digest the belief of three Persons in the Godhead itself. You see how both, by various ways, but with one and the same view, namely, to preserve the unity, trample on the truths of Scripture; and you see also what a monstrous expedient the latter have pitched on for this purpose, to preserve the unity of God, they have given themselves three gods instead of one. Had they only considered, that, as God is incomprehensible, there may be a personal distinction in his nature, which no way affects the unity of that nature, for aught their reason can discover to the contrary, they had never been in the least danger of falling into the very error they would avoid. How could they have found out assuredly and clearly, that there is but one God, if the Scriptures had not revealed it to them? And if the same Scriptures give the name and attributes of the one God to three persons, why do not they as readily admit the latter as the former? Is it not because their reason cannot so easily account for the one as for the other? And is not this to prefer their reason to God's word? Nay, is it not to confound their very reason, and set it at variance with itself, since they acknowledge the Divine Being incomprehensible? They ought certainly to take his word for it, that he consists of three divine Persons, rather than contradict him in this, when, in the same breath, they own they know no more of him than what he is pleased to discover. If the Sabellians could lay aside their conceit, and cease to understand that of the offices of Christ and the Holy Ghost, which is said of

their nature; and if the Arians, &c. could lay aside theirs, and cease, on the contrary, to understand that of their nature, which is said of their offices; we should soon be all of one mind. But whether ever they will have candour enough to do this, or not, one thing we must do, which is, ever firmly to believe, there is but one Divine Nature, one only God, in whom there are three Persons, all equally divine by nature, but distinguished by a subordination in their offices, as well as by different signification of their names; and one of them by the assumption of an inferior nature. This makes the exposition and reconciliation of all the Scriptures, relative to the Trinity, easy and natural to us.

It would also greatly help to extricate our opponents from their difficulties, if they would seriously consider why the properties and operations of the one Person are often ascribed to another; namely, because each person is God; and therefore God in one place, is said to do that, which, in another, the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost, is said to do, in virtue of attributes and powers common to all the three. And, farther, they would do well to consider, which indeed they are apt enough to do, but for a wrong purpose, that the actions of one person are often ascribed to another; because the one, in the divine economy, acts by commission from the other, as both Christ and the Holy Ghost are, in different places, distinctly said to regenerate and sanctify us; and farther still to consider, that the Father, being the fountain of the Deity, and by the economy, the sender, while the other persons are sent, is sometimes called God in passages where neither the Son, nor the Holy Ghost, is so styled; not because they are not God, or less properly God than the Father, for each is often set forth as God, and there is but one God; but purely because, equal as they are in nature with the Father, they act in the work of our salvation by authority and mission from him. If God hath a Son begotten of him, a Spirit proceeding from him, may he not send and employ them without derogation to their nature? Does it follow, that, because they are sent, they are therefore of a different or inferior nature? Or, if the Scriptures often call them God, are we nevertheless to understand they are not truly God; because, in the same passage, where the two last are mentioned by their personal appellations, the first,

without his personal appellation, is mentioned only by the name of God? He whom the Scriptures in many places, or even in one place, call God, is God, although in ever so many other places they should happen to call him by another name, and not by the name of God; since in none of those places do they say, or so much as intimate, that he is not God. I speak as plainly as I can; but I shall perhaps make myself more intelligible by an instance. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians, xii. 4—6, we are told, that 'there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and diversities of operations, but the same God, which worketh all in all.' Here the second and third Persons are mentioned by the names of Lord and Spirit, while the first only is styled God. But does it not appear from this very passage, that, if 'God works all,' he must work the gifts and administrations, as well as the operations? And what follows, but that he who confers the gifts, and he who performs the administrations, is God, as well as he who works the operations? But, supposing this did not so clearly appear from the passage, as it does, is the Son, or the Holy Ghost, to be deprived of their title to the divinity, merely because they are not here directly called God, when, in so many other places, they actually are? This, if it were rightly attended to, might serve for a solution to above one half of all our difficulties. But to return a little closer to my text.

I may venture to lay it down as a rule, that, in treating of God, and his revelation, especially of that which is most mysterious in reference to either, we ought to proceed with at least as much method and caution as we do in lower sciences, wherein there is not so much danger of error, nor so much mischief arising from it. We are, therefore, not to reason about God without axioms to found our reasonings on; nor to build on certain axioms at one time, and to depart from them at another, just as our caprice, or the pinch of an argument, may tempt us. Now what is the grand axiom of Christianity? Is it not agreed, that the Scriptures are the word of God, and, as such, implicitly to be believed? If this is the case, our apprehensions have nothing to do, but to imbibe the plain notices of Scripture; nor our reason, but to argue from Scripture. What master in any science dis-

putes the axioms, or self-evident propositions of that science, or asks a reason for them? Who, in physics, asks a reason why the whole is greater than any of its parts? And what Christian, in theology, shall ask a reason for that which the Scripture affirms? Although what God tells us in Scripture is not evident of itself, but requires his veracity to evidence it; yet, when once it is so evidenced, common sense will allow, it is then on a level with that which is self-evident; or, rather, is more evident; for God's affirmation can give more evidence to a thing, than any thing can give to itself. We may take that for self-evident which is not; but God cannot be mistaken.

Now I have given abundant proof, that God affirms his own unity, as also the divinity of the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To ask a reason for either, or how the one can consist with the other, is to speak like a Deist, or an Atheist; is to doubt whether the Scriptures are the word of God; or to deny the veracity of God, and to prefer reason, in a matter confessedly above reason, to his word and affirmation. Let our opponents, therefore, tell us, whether they mean to enter into debate with us, as Christians, or Deists (for it is indeed no easy matter to distinguish, when we are every moment to be dodged from bare reason to Scripture, and back again from Scripture to independent reason), that we may know under what principles or axioms we are to dispute. If they declare for Christianity and Scripture, and then tell us our doctrine of the Trinity is unintelligible and inconsistent; we confidently answer, there is not a more intelligible doctrine in the world than that of the Trinity, as we hold it. This and other inexplicable doctrines of our religion were not revealed, either as mysteries, or as trials of our faith. The doctrines themselves, like the works of God, are plain and obvious, so far as we are concerned to know them; and never become dark or mysterious to us, till we begin to pry farther than our wants require, or our capacities extend. The mystery therefore lies not in the doctrine itself, but in the application of our understandings to it. Now, as this happens in all other parts of knowledge, let us only deal by religion as we do by other things, and every difficulty will vanish. Let us believe and practise, as far as we understand, and not attempt to examine, much less to pronounce, a hair's breadth

beyond those bounds, to which God hath confined our intellect. And do we not understand the doctrine of the Trinity? Can any thing be more easily understood than these propositions? There is but one God. The Father is that one God. The Son is that one God. The Holy Ghost is that one God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are three distinct persons.

This is the doctrine of the Trinity, which every clown can understand; and our adversaries perfectly well understand it, or they could not ask us to account for the consistency of the propositions which contain it, nor argue against that consistency in the manner they do. Now it is nonsense in them to ask for this, without premising, that they cannot believe in contradictions, and that those propositions appear contradictory to them. How contradictory? That is contradictory, and nothing but that, which affirms and denies the connexion between the same set of ideas and terms. Surely this is not the case here. Do we say there is but one God, and yet three Gods? Or, do we say there is but one Divine Person, and yet three Divine Persons? Or, do we, they, or common sense, ever say, God and person are synonymous terms? Do we, or can they, say, Scripture makes them synonymous? Where then is the contradiction? But they say, they cannot conceive the possibility of three Persons in one God. In this they express themselves ill. They should say, they cannot conceive how it is possible. If they will be so modest as to say this only, we will say the very same; for although we take God's word for it, that it is so in fact, and therefore must be not only possible, but true, yet we own we cannot see how; that is, we cannot shew the very possibility; and we give a reason which ought to silence them; for they agree with us in it; namely, because God is incomprehensible. Before, therefore, they can have a right to proceed one step farther with us, they must give up this point, and prove to us, that God is, in respect at least to the point under debate, comprehensible to them and us. But, previous to this wonderful demonstration of omniscience in man, we beg they would let us see whether they comprehend any one of all God's works; for it would be a strange presumption to attempt the infinite before they have made themselves competent masters of the finite. Here God rebates

their vanity, and sets them at an infinite distance from himself; for they are utterly unable to comprehend any thing, even a mite, or a grain of sand. 'How marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty!' How infinitely more great and marvellous thou thyself! 'Great things dost thou, which we cannot comprehend;' how then shall we comprehend thyself!

Notwithstanding what hath been said, the persons we have to deal with still insist, that our doctrine of the Trinity is contradictory. Although the words God and person, say they, are not synonymous, yet God and Divine Person are. They define a person to be an intelligent being or agent, and say, God is a Divine Person; and therefore, according to them, to maintain that there is but one God, and three Divine Persons, is the same as to affirm, that there is but one God, and yet three Gods.

It is obvious, that this objection to the doctrine of the Trinity is purely philosophical; that the Scriptures nowhere give us any term for person, nor define the idea of personality; that revelation, neither expecting to find all men philosophers, nor intending to make any man a philosopher, speaks to us, as to plain illiterate men, in common and ordinary words, whereby ideas familiar to us are usually conveyed; and that therefore we are seldom or never to examine or interpret its doctrine by the vain philosophy and refinements of men. Nay, it is farther to be observed, that God, speaking in condescension to the capacities of the vulgar, sometimes delivers that which, although most true in effect, and in regard to the purpose for which it is spoken, is nevertheless, if literally taken, inconsistent with the known nature of things. His word, for instance, tells us that the sun stood still in the days of Joshua; which was true in effect, for the day was protracted. But had that which was true in philosophy been said; namely, that the earth stood still, it could not have been understood. Whatsoever philosophy may dislike in this manner of speaking, it hath less reason to be surprised, that God, in communicating the knowledge of high and mysterious things, particularly of himself, to the bulk of mankind, that is, to the unlearned, should shadow those things by others that are common and familiar to their apprehensions; because thus only it is possible, even for the most knowing, to conceive any idea of that which is supernatural

and incomprehensible. Now, to apply this to our purpose; it appears that the personal distinction between man and man is, throughout the Scriptures, taken, as in all other historical accounts of human transactions, from common use and observation; that is, men are there differenced from their outward appearances, by their figures, features, &c. This man is commended, that censured; this rewarded, that punished; as one who is known by his face, voice, and the like, to be the very person who did such or such actions. It is no more necessary in such narratives, than it is in the trials of a civil court, to tell wherein personality, or personal identity, consists, in order to distinguish one person from another. It is in the same manner, and with an eye to the same way of distinguishing one person from another, that their peculiar actions are ascribed by name, and, in one instance, by sensible manifestations, respectively to the three Persons in the blessed Trinity. Thus, and thus only, they seem to be personally distinguished, while each is styled God, and we are assured, there is but one God. Hence it is that we conceive there is in God some unknown incomprehensible distinction, which the personal distinction of man from man, as it is apprehended, not philosophically, but in common use, is made to represent. As to the definition of personality, it is by no means settled among the philosophers, some placing it in the will, some in consciousness, and some in the soul itself, and therefore nothing certain can be drawn from any one definition of it, to affect the present debate. That in the objection is liable to great exceptions. First, it denies personality to idiots, who, as such, are not intelligent beings or agents. And, in the next place, it makes God a person, though he is never so called, either in common propriety of speech, or sound logic; although now that the doctrine of the Trinity hath been revealed, a person, analogically understood, may be called God; I say, analogically; for what is a person? Is it not a human creature, consisting of an angelic or rational spirit, an animal soul, and an organized body? This is its true and proper signification, which, in its true, proper, and immediate sense, may be given to Christ, because he is perfect man; but cannot, otherwise than by analogy, be given to the Father, or the Holy Ghost; for neither hath the properties of a person, as just now de-

fined, but such unknown, unknowable properties only, as are analogous thereunto. In Scripture, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are spoken of as distinct persons; each is there called God; and we are there assured, there is but one God. The one God, therefore, considered as not personally distinguished, cannot be a person, even by analogy; for this would imply a contradiction, both in terms and ideas; which no Christian can ever ascribe to the word of God, or any Deist convict it of.

But, since our adversaries have forced us to answer for the perspicuity and consistence of our doctrine, we have a right to retort the same questions on them. Be pleased, O ye Arians and Socinians, to tell us, in the name of common sense, what you mean by saying, there is but one God, and yet saying, that Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost ought to be called gods. You say, they are delegated gods. If they are, then there are more gods than one? so that your propositions, though very intelligible, are flatly contradictory in terms. You endeavour indeed to save them from contrariety of ideas; because you say, you mean one thing by God, in the first proposition, and another by God, in the second. But pray observe, that, if your propositions are not contrary to each other in idea, the last, however, is diametrically contrary to both the Testaments, both in idea and terms. Now, why such an equivocation on so awful a word? Or is there any one word that less admits of a double meaning? We may, on the strength of that analogy, which runs through all created nature, couple the highest and lowest creature in the universe together, so as to give them one name. But why will you give the only name of our language, by which the infinite Being may be distinguished in our understandings, our affections, or worship, to creatures; when the difference is infinite, and the consequences shocking to the first principle of all true religion! How provokingly impudent is the outcry you set up against us for breaking in on the unity of God, when you have reason to know in your consciences, that we, who hold the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, as it hath always been deservedly called, are the only men in the world, who adhere both to that unity, and the truth of Scripture; while you yourselves have three gods, whom you avowedly believe in

and worship! If you know these things, and how is it possible you should not, why do you, to cover your own impiety, and throw an odium on us, labour to blacken our characters with the guilt and absurdity of a contradictory Tritheism, which you now openly avow on all occasions? How can you pretend to censure the church of Rome for her worship of saints and angels, when you are guilty of a worse idolatry yourselves? She distinguishes the degree of worship which she pays to the supreme Being, from that which she pays to creatures; and makes the latter inferior; whereas you pay but one kind of worship, namely, divine worship, to what you call creatures, as well as to God. You agree with her in the adoration of angels; for you place Christ and the Holy Ghost in the angelic order; and you differ with her in this, that whereas she gives inferior worship to all the angels, you give divine worship to two only. Pray consider the censure of St. Paul against you both. 'Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind;' Col. ii. 18. You condemn the innocent use of unscriptural words in us, and yet allow yourselves a most disingenuous use of the word Trinity, calling it the 'holy Trinity,' the 'ever-blessed Trinity,' &c. whereas you blasphemously mean by it, such a union of God with two creatures, as reason and Scripture strongly protest against. If we are resolved to equivocate, it is better I own, to employ your own, than God's words, in so scandalous a practice. But, surely, whatever words we employ, it must be very uncouth in you, to tolerate in your own writings the equivocal use of a word, which you will not suffer us to use in one plain consistent sense. And to what purpose do you thus apply this word? Is it not to give yourselves an air of orthodoxy with the people, who have a high veneration for the term; and at the same time, to obtrude the worship of creatures? If you are right in this, our Saviour, his apostles, and all the primitive fathers, must have been wrong in so peremptorily inculcating the worship of one God only, at a time, and in a country where all the Gentiles, as you do, worshipped one supreme, and other subordinate gods. If the Christians in those days worshipped one supreme God,

and two subordinate deities, why did not the Gentiles retort their own arguments against Polytheism on themselves? The Gentiles knew they worshipped Christ, as appears by Pliny's letter to Trajan; and yet they never said, Why do you blame us for adoring subordinate deities, when you do the same yourselves? No, the Greek and Roman Polytheists could not do this; because the Christians made it evident in all their disputes and apologies, that they adored Christ as one God with the Father. But pray consider farther, what sort of being it is, that you Arians have placed in the Holy Trinity, and called your Saviour, under the name of Christ. You say, he hath not the essence or nature of the one true eternal God; you say, he hath not the essence or nature of man; for you peremptorily insist, that the Logos, or Word, is to him in the place of a human soul, and that he hath no human soul; while the Scriptures assure us, 'he took not on him the nature of angels.' Compare this astonishing doctrine with these Scriptures, which so often call him God; and tell us, there is but one God; and again with those that call him a man; and then tell us, with what conformity to common sense and Scripture, you call that being a true God, who is neither eternal nor supreme, or that being a true man, who hath not a human soul. Tell us, if you can, what or who this is, in whose name you are baptized; this that is, by nature, neither God, nor an angel, nor even a man. Is he but a mere animal? O impious consequence! Yet how you can draw one less irrational, less unscriptural, or less shocking either to the understanding or heart of a Christian, from your principles, we cannot possibly apprehend. Here, we know, you will be greatly distressed; for if you allow it possible, that God and man may be united in one person, you can with no shadow of reason disallow the union of three Divine Persons in one God. We know you only oppose the mystery in the former instance, lest it should lead the way to the mystery in the latter; for your understandings, like those of the Deists, have a strange reluctance to mysteries, even in supernatural and incomprehensible things, wherein they are unavoidable. It is to evade these that you so often run counter to Scripture and common sense, and shamelessly manage the debate with us by equivocations on almost every material word to be used between us.

Let us, in the name of God, and common honesty, make use, on this as well as on all occasions, of such words as best express our meaning; but let each word have one open determinate sense of its own. Let us have some peculiar name for the infinite Being, consecrated to that application only, and not degraded to the signification of creatures, that we may know whether we are speaking of, and worshipping, the same God, or not. As there is no medium between God and his creatures; as there is no lowering the idea of God, nor raising the idea of a creature; let us never give that name to a creature which we give to God, nor that name to God which we assign to a creature. Either Christ is God and the Holy Ghost is God, or they are but creatures. Let us, therefore, either call them God, or creatures, and deal with them as such in our reasonings and services. Let us not call them both; for both they cannot possibly be.

We cannot tell how great, how powerful, how glorious, a creature God can make; nor to what high degrees of goodness, wisdom, and perfection, he may exalt him in a progress upward, through an inconceivable number of ages. Neither can we guess how swift this progress may be rendered through the infinite bounty of God, and the vehement love of his creature. But I will suppose it as rapid as thought itself; and, to help our imaginations, I will suppose this creature to arise, in one moment, from the rank of a mite, to that of the lowest angelic nature; and from thence, the next moment, to the very highest. I will suppose him to rise with the same rapidity through every moment of more ages than arithmetic can stretch to, allowing every figure, if you please, to stand for ten thousand million times its own usual number; and now let us examine what he is at the end of this progress. Is he not still a creature? May it not be as truly said of him now, as it was when he was a mite, that there is an infinite distance between God and him? May it not be said, with the strictest truth and propriety, that he is as nothing in comparison of the infinite? How then dare we give him one name with God? He is still a bounded, whereas God is an infinite, Being. He can be present only somewhere, whereas God is present every where. He can only know some things, whereas God knows all things. He can only know some part of what is, whereas God knows all things that are, and even the things that are not yet in

being. He can do some things only, whereas God is almighty. He is only temporary, as to his origin, and depends for his duration on the will of God, who can reduce him to nothing in a moment; whereas God sets out with eternity, holds on with eternity, and exists of himself. That could not be said of this creature, which is said of the Son, that 'he is equal with God;' or, under his name of the Word, that 'he was from the beginning God.' Neither could that be said of this creature, which is said of the Holy Ghost, that he is 'the eternal Spirit.' Let us therefore be content to confound all created natures by the preposterous use of terms; let us give the same name to matter and motion, to light and darkness, to truth and falsehood, to life and death, to happiness and misery; let us 'put evil for good, and good for evil;' but let us not put the infinite Creator for the finite creature, nor the finite creature for the infinite Creator.

Enough hath been said concerning the monstrous trinity of the Antitrinitarians. It is now time to return to the true Trinity, demonstrated already from Scripture in the four former Discourses, which have left us in reality nothing to do here by way of proof, but only to make some remarks on the awful subject, such as may tend either to illustrate the thing itself, or to reconcile us to it as an article of faith, which reason has no right to protest against, since reason can form no judgment, whether it is consistent in itself or not.

Let the first remark be, that the doctrine of the Trinity is collectively set forth in many passages both of the Old and New Testament. What hath been formerly said prevents the necessity of multiplying passages for this purpose; wherefore I shall content myself with two or three from each. And first from the Old Testament.

God saith, Gen. i. 26. 'Let us make man in our own image;' and, iii. 22. 'Behold, the man is become like one of us.' He saith also, Gen. xi. 7. 'Let us go down, and there confound their language.' These, with several other places to the like effect, shew a plurality of persons in the divine nature.

But there are others, wherein the three Persons are distinctly mentioned, either by some separate name and title, or by a separate operation, as Isa. lxiii. 7—10. 'I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord—for he said, Surely

they are my people—So he was their Saviour. In all their afflictions he was afflicted. In his love, and in his pity, he redeemed them—but they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit.' Here the three Persons, the Lord, the Saviour, the Holy Spirit, are mentioned by three distinct names, and in three distinct operations. They are likewise distinctly set forth, Isa. lxi. 1, 2. 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings (or the gospel, as Christ, applying the prophecy to himself, words it) to the meek— to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, to comfort all that mourn.' Here is one person sending, a second anointing, and a third both sent and anointed. Their distinction appears also from the sixth of the same prophet, where the seraphim say, ver. 3. 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;' and, ver. 8. 'The Lord saith, Who will go for us?' The latter words plainly intimate a plurality of persons, and the former shew them to be the three Divine Persons; for that Christ and the Holy Ghost are included, is plain, because the words are expressly applied to Christ, John xii. 41, and to the Holy Ghost, Acts xxviii. 25, as I formerly remarked.

Under the new dispensation, this doctrine, so high and incomprehensible in itself, was, so far as concerns our apprehensions and faith, made as plain as the most obvious practical precepts therein delivered. How manifestly the divinity of the second and third person is declared in the New Testament, we have already seen. And this, of necessity, infers the doctrine of the Trinity, since there can possibly be but one God. But, to take the doctrine collectively, it appears, that all the three Persons must be that one God; for Christ says, 'I and the Father are one Being,' John x. 30. and xiv. 9. 'He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father;' which evidently proves the essential unity of the two first Persons. Now the unity of the Holy Ghost with the Father is proved from Matt. x. 20. where he is called 'the Spirit of the Father;' and his unity with Christ, from Gal. iv. 6. where he is called 'the Spirit of the Son.' He is also called 'the Spirit of Christ,' Rom. viii. 9. and 1 Pet. i. 11. He is so often peculiarly, and by way of distinction from all other spirits, called 'the Spirit of God,' that there is no room left to suppose him a creature. If then he is a

Divine Person, he is as much one Being with the Father, as the Father is one Being with the Son. The Trinity is clearly represented to us, 1 John v. 7. 'There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one Being.' Although the sense of these words needs no comment, yet their genuineness requires some defence. But I shall not here enter into the discussion of a point, that would ask a long discourse to itself. I shall only observe to you, that it was a much easier matter for a copier to omit these words, which begin exactly as the following verse does, supposing them originally in the text, than to foist them in, supposing them spurious; that St. Cyprian actually quoted them, before the Arian and Macedonian controversies were broached; that, if these words are left out, then 'the heavenly witness' is taken away, and 'the earthly witness,' in the eighth verse, is left standing by itself, which appears to render the ninth verse utterly incoherent and absurd; for if there are not the two kinds of witnesses premised, where is the sense of saying, 'If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater?' However, it is needless to contend about this passage, since all it sets forth is so abundantly cleared up and established in other parts of Scripture, whereof there is no doubt. The Trinity is so strongly and clearly revealed to us at the baptism of our Saviour, that the primitive Christians were wont to say, 'Go to Jordan, thou Arian, and there thou wilt see the Trinity.' 'Go ye,' saith Christ to his apostles, Matt. xxviii. 19. 'teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.' Would it not be a strange imagination to suppose our Saviour should order all nations to be baptized in the name, and by the authority, of God and two creatures? and that he should not have foreseen, on this most important occasion, what was so likely to follow, what did actually follow, that all nations, being thus baptized, looked on themselves as thereby obliged to believe in, and worship, the two last on a level with the first? How strongly is this argument enforced against our adversaries, by what they themselves allow; namely, that these words, 'I believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,' was the answer which every one, who was to be baptized, was obliged to give at the font to his baptizer, down from the apostles'

time, through all ages of the church, as often as adults were admitted to that sacrament! No words can more clearly express the divinity of each person; for, that the word God is given to each, the Greek original, used in the primitive church, manifestly shews; because the article, which is prefixed to God, is also prefixed to the Father, again to the Son, and again to the Holy Ghost. I will translate it as closely into English as our language will bear, 'I believe in the God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;' which is strictly the same as, 'I believe in God, who is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.' To put it out of all doubt that the primitive Christians thus precisely understood it, hear Tertullian's paraphrase on it, in his treatise against Praxeas, 'The Father God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God; and each and every of them God.' There is a remarkable passage to this effect in Cyprian's epistle to Jubaianus, which, both because it is so strong a proof of what I am saying, and also because it is that very passage wherein he cites the controverted text from the First Epistle of St. John, just now mentioned, is very well worthy our hearing. He is arguing against the validity of heretical baptism. "If any one can be baptized among the heretics, he must receive remission of sins; if he does receive remission of sins, he is also sanctified, and made the temple of God. But I ask, of what God? If of the Creator, this he could not be; because he did not believe in him; if of Christ, neither can he become his temple, who denies Christ to be God: if of the Holy Ghost; 'since these three are one Being,' how can the Holy Ghost be reconciled to him, who is the enemy of the Father and the Son?" Did this holy martyr mistake the faith he died for? Did he die by the hand of idolaters, for idolatry? Give me leave to add the confession of faith reported by Cyril of Jerusalem, who wrote about forty years before the heresy of Macedonius was condemned by the council of Constantinople, and who was not altogether unsuspected of Arianism, on account of an epithet therein given to the Holy Ghost. The words are these, 'I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God himself, and in the *consubstantial* Holy Ghost, the Paraclete.' The doctrine of the Trinity, as we hold it at this day, was what the whole body

of the church adhered to, for the three first hundred years after Christ, and what the three hundred and eighteen bishops, in the council of Nice, unanimously agreed in. Were they all mistaken? Had the true religion no adherents, but a few Ebionites, Cerinthians, Nicolaitans, Gnostics, Photinians? Did John, at the request of the Asiatic bishops, write his Gospel against the true Christianity? How much in vain, on this amazing supposition, which now so strongly prevails against the authority of the Fathers, were all the preachings of Christ, and all the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, when so few of their followers could be persuaded to worship them under the belief of their being creatures!

But here now it may be asked, how it comes to pass, if this doctrine had been so very intelligible, that so many in all ages have opposed it? In answer to this, give me leave to remark, that there are always numbers who are much apter to controvert a point from motives of prejudice, pride, ambition, disappointment, &c. working in their own corrupt hearts, than on account of any absurdity or obscurity in the point itself. How otherwise, than on the truth of this remark, shall we be able to assign a cause, why so many millions, in every age of the world, have, and still do adhere to the grossest errors, in opposition to the clearest truths?

As to the doctrine under consideration, I will be bold to say, there is not, in any branch of knowledge, a more intelligible set of propositions, than those in which it is contained, considered in themselves; nor more easily demonstrated; if we exclude all foreign principles, and only look for the axioms of this demonstration in the word of God, where the propositions themselves are laid before us. There is but one faith for the profound doctor, and the illiterate labourer: that faith, therefore, must be plain and intelligible. When the Athanasian creed, or the laboured performances of divines, exhibit a more intricate view of it, who is to be blamed? Are not they, who, by infinite subtilties and refinements, constrain us either to refine on our side, or suffer the truth to be rarefied into a smoke, and the people, over whom we are to watch, blinded, and turned aside from the path of light, in that cloud? Whether there are in the one only God three distinct Persons, each eternal, each omnipotent, the plain unlearned man cannot determine by his own reason; neither

can the ablest metaphysical divine. But, by the help of Scripture, the plain man may determine the question himself; and is not this enough for him? Or, ought it not to be enough for the greatest casuist? But if the distempered curiosity of men will itch after refinements on so sacred a subject, let them deal fairly by their own understandings, and read with impartiality on both sides; let them read Episcopius and Clarke on the one, with Bull and Waterland on the other. What a reproach it is to our adversaries, that they have never solidly answered these two clear and demonstrative reasoners, nor Pearson's Commentary on the Creed, which stare them in the face, while they are every day pelting their tenets with sly, but trifling performances, that take no more notice of their arguments, than if no such books had ever been published! Are they not worth their animadversion? If they are, why so many paltry nibbling trifles of their own, and the arguments of these unnoticed? Till they are solidly answered, we shall take the liberty to look on the controversy as decided. If our adversaries themselves think them unanswerable, how does it impeach their honesty, not only not to submit, but to leave these bulwarks unassaulted at their backs, while they go on emptily bravading in one quarter, and cunningly stealing little marches in another? It is a glorious evidence for the truths we maintain, that, in all ages, their abettors have been ready openly to declare for them, publicly to defend them, and, when they were called to it, nobly to die for them; while deceit and cunning have generally been the characteristics of their opponents, who, pretending one thing, and aiming at another, artfully lurk under subtle refinements, and skulk behind double meanings.

Long as I have already trespassed on your patience, I should not do justice either to you, or my subject, if I dismissed it, without observing to you the true basis, whereon the difficulties started, as to this doctrine, ought to be treated, in order to a thorough and satisfactory removal of them all. We cannot think or speak of God, as we do of sensible things, without presumption, and great danger of error. There is in reality nothing common between the infinite and finite. It is, therefore, only by analogy, that we can form any idea of God. There is nothing in God, that does, or in

creatures, that does not, admit of increase or diminution. There is nothing, therefore, the same in both. Were it possible, that any thing in the creature could be so improved, enlarged, and exalted, as to become infinite; the creature might be transformed into God. Were it possible, that any thing in God could be so lowered and contracted, as to become finite, God might be debased into a finite being. These two impossibilities may be reduced into one; it is utterly impossible to render the distance between God and the creature less than infinite. Now, of all impossibilities, this is unquestionably the greatest. I conclude, therefore, that there is no one thing in God, and in us, the same; for, if there were, we might possibly come to be, in respect to that thing, on a level with him, either by diminishing it in him, or enlarging it in us. We are not of the same nature then with God; but infinitely different, even in our spiritual capacities and thoughts. 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' Notwithstanding this infinite distance between him and us, he hath laid out a way for us to know him, so far as is necessary to the ends of that knowledge; and that is, by the resemblance of himself, in which he hath been pleased to frame our nature. As a man is but the image of God, so the personality of man is but the image of personality in God; and therefore we can know nothing of this distinction in the Divine Nature, as it is in itself, but only by the shadow of it in our own. Where then is the difficulty of admitting such a distinction in God, since it is only like that among men; when, for ought we can possibly imagine, it may be so different in some unknown, some unknowable, respects, as that, instead of bearing on the unity of his nature, it may be even more consistent with it, than the want of such a distinction could be? If it is strictly true, that in God there is a distinction, so resembling that of person from person among men, as, when revealed to us, may furnish a basis for that knowledge of him, which is necessary to us, this surely is sufficient; and, if we are not excessively vain and presumptuous, we can be under no temptation to the denial of such a distinction in him, while we do not suppose that distinction to be

in itself exactly the same with the personal distinction among ourselves. Now, to suppose any thing in the infinite Being the same with any thing in us, who are creatures and finite, is the wildest flight the distemperature of imagination can take. What makes it still wilder is, that, in the philosophical way, the true idea of our own personality hath not been yet agreed on, some placing it in consciousness, some in the will, and others in the individuality of the soul. How absurdly unphilosophical is he, who, not being able, either to comprehend the Divine Nature, or to penetrate into the internal source and nature of his own personality, will nevertheless presume to pronounce any thing, from his own researches, concerning the sameness or similarity of this distinction in God and men! If he would so far honour the subject, as not to treat it with nonsense, he must take his idea of human personality from common sense and experience, and that of the divine from revelation. If he does this, he will find them similar and analogous throughout.

As, therefore, the Divine Being is of no *genus* or *species*, that is, of no kind or sort of being, so it is impossible for us to conceive it, as it is in itself, or to give a proper and immediate definition of it, as we do of those things, whose essential differences are known to us. When we say, God is the infinite Being, we sufficiently distinguish him from all other beings; although, in so saying, we both think and speak by a negative, which may discriminate, but can never define the nature of any thing. How is it then that we come by the knowledge of God? No doubt, by a revealed similitude or representation. However, as I observed before, this sort of knowledge serves all the purposes of intercourse between him and us, as well as a proper immediate knowledge of him could do; because by this conception of him, we may as deeply reverence that majesty, as gratefully love that goodness, as awfully fear that justice, as dutifully obey that power, in him, which are analogous to the like attributes in us, as we could do, were we capable of it, by the immediate and proper conception of him. In like manner, so far as we are concerned to know the dispensation of his goodness, wisdom, and power, towards ourselves; and so far as the knowledge of a personal distinction in him is necessary to the knowledge of that dispensation, particularly in the

scheme of our redemption; the strict and close resemblance between the personal distinction in him, and the like distinction among men, as effectually answers every end, both in our understandings, and on our affections, as it could do, were the personality precisely the same in both. Were they set forth as actually the very same in both, it would be perfectly senseless and presumptuous to deny the possibility of such a distinction in a nature confessedly incomprehensible. But since there are all the grounds in the world for our believing them to be only analagous, the mystery, which before was reconcilable to reason, although above it, leaves reason now so far behind it, that we too must lose sight of her, before we presume to say, there can be no resemblance of such a distinction in God.

The gracious Being, foreknowing our utter incapacity of conceiving him, as he is in himself, hath provided such resemblances of himself in the works of his creation, as do aptly and sufficiently represent him to us, as soon as he discovers that resemblance. But that we may not mistake those things for representations which are not, nor miss those that are, he hath pointed them out to us in his word. And, lest any share of our adoration should stop and terminate in the representation, he hath, by two express commandments, the one restraining all worship to himself, and the other absolutely forbidding all representative worship, so limited the use of these resemblances, as to preclude the possibility of a misapplication, while his commandments are at all attended to.

Now the resemblances he hath thus provided, and pointed out to us, are, first, The nature of man; for we are told, Gen. i. 26, that 'He hath formed us in his own image,' or 'after his likeness;' so that our souls represent his spiritual nature; our reason, his wisdom; our justice, his righteousness; our compassion, his mercy; our dominion over the creatures, his power, &c. Here the Godhead is simply, and without distinction, represented to us. But as some knowledge of the personal distinction in his nature became necessary to us, in order that we might understand the scheme of our redemption, wherein each Divine Person assumed a distinct office, the personal distinction between man and man is made use of to represent the like distinction in

God. And farther, that we may the more readily believe the consistency of this distinction with the unity of God, there are three essences or natures united in that of man; the vegetative, the animal, and the angelic nature, which constitute one individual man. It is true, there is but one nature in God; and therefore this is not a parallel instance, but a partial image. But, if three different natures can be united into one individual essence, why shall we think it impossible, that three persons (person being taken analogically), all of the same nature, should constitute one incomprehensible essence?

And farther still, to figure to us, in a lively and striking manner, the properties peculiarly active in each person for the accomplishment of so glorious a scheme, he hath, in holy Scripture set forth a luminous body as the representation of the divinity, or of God the Father, who is the fountain of the divinity. He hath here also represented Christ by light, and the Holy Ghost by fire, or heat. God was instead of a sun, and Christ, of light, to that New Jerusalem, which St. John saw in the twenty-first of the Revelation. 'The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.' So, Isa. lx. 'The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee for an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.' In pursuance of the same beautiful figure, God is called a sun in the eighty-fourth Psalm. Our Saviour calls himself 'The light of the world,' John viii. 12. and St. John is so fond of the figure, that he applies it to Christ, and his religion, on all occasions. The Holy Ghost is figured by fire, Matt. iii. 11, where John the Baptist says, Christ 'shall baptize his disciples with the Holy Ghost, and with fire,' which Isaiah calls the Spirit of burning, ch. iv. 4. Acts ii. 3. 'the Holy Ghost descends on the apostles in the appearance of cloven tongues, like as of fire.' Christ seems to be represented by light, and the Holy Ghost by fire, in one and the same place, Isa. x. 17. 'The light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame.' Similitudes of our own adapting to God, or the Trinity, are dangerous things. But this, which the Scriptures themselves have painted out, and the primitive Fa-

thers therefore made so frequent use of, is both safe, and highly serviceable in the application. As the luminous body is the source of light and heat, so the Father is the fountain, from whence the Son is generated, and the Holy Spirit proceeds. As light and heat are of the same nature and substance, and coeval, with the luminous body from whence they flow, so Christ and the Holy Ghost are consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father. As light dispels the darkness, cheering and directing us in all the offices of life, so Christ, dispersing the night of superstition and idolatry, sheds the light of true religion on the soul, and guides it in the way of eternal life. As fire or heat prevails against that cold which benumbs the body, so the Holy Ghost, driving out the stupefaction and insensibility of our hearts, revives our pious reflections, quickens our consciences, and gives warmth and vigour to our love of God; and therefore St. Paul saith, 1 Thess. v. 19. 'Quench not the Spirit.' As we neither see the luminous body, nor direct our steps towards it, but by its own light, so Christ saith, John xiv. 6. 'No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father;' John xiv. 9. As a pleasing warmth both moves and guides us to the fire, from whence it proceeds; so 'have we an access by one Spirit to the Father;' Eph. ii. 18. This glorious similitude might be traced much farther, through the purity, the activity, the immensity, of God; but I forbear, having touched on it only for these two reasons; first, because a great part of the Scriptures will seem to lose their force and beauty to a reader that is not aware of the true application made of it in those holy writings; and, secondly, because it removes all the difficulty of conceiving how Christ could be eternally generated, and the Holy Ghost from all eternity proceed, from the Father; how they can be of the same substance with him, and yet distinct, both from each other, and from him; since we see in this similitude an instance of all these, even in matter.

Having already thrown together all the reflections I had to make on this subject, it is high time to finish this long Discourse. Let us therefore try whether we can answer the two questions started in my text; 'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty

to perfection?' As to the first, we may venture to say, we can by searching find him out; but by searching what? No doubt, his word, and his works. We see in each an evident proof of his existence. But, as to the second question, we cannot possibly 'know him to perfection;' because both his word, and the comparison of his nature with our own, represent him as altogether incomprehensible to our minds, and therefore forbid the possibility of such knowledge. So far as he hath taught us in his word, we may know him; but no farther. We there see him eternal, almighty, omnipresent, omniscient; we there see him infinitely just, infinitely holy, infinitely merciful; a bountiful Creator and Provider; an awful Governor; a compassionate Saviour; a kind Comforter; we there see him distinguished into three divine personalities, each whereof is employed in a distinct office, while they all, with one unbounded power, one unbounded wisdom, one unbounded mercy, pursue the blessed work of our reformation and happiness. No essential part of this work is left to the ministry of creatures. The glorious spirits of all orders superior to our own act only an underpart in it. The renovation of the moral world had too much of creation in it to admit the agency of limited beings. They are sufficiently honoured in being permitted to carry messages between God and his other intellectual creatures, to publish the approach, or to follow in the train, of him who was to perform any primary part in a scheme infinitely transcending the capacities and powers of all limited natures. Besides, though the angels had been capable of taking a higher or greater share therein, it was by no means fit they should, inasmuch as such an interposition might have diverted the current of our gratitude to God, who, as he is the author of our being, and the donor of our happiness, ought also to be the sole object and centre of our love. God therefore chose 'to tread the winepress of this warfare alone;' and he alone was equal to it; for he was 'mighty to save.'

This now is the most glorious, the most gracious discovery ever made to mankind; a discovery wherein every necessary intimation, and even mystery, is laid open for our instruction; every virtue exemplified for our imitation; every condescension vouchsafed; every frightful danger encountered; every seemingly insurmountable obstacle re-

moved; and, O the inconceivable goodness of God! even every disgrace and misery, banishment, poverty, death, endured; that 'we may become the children of God, and heirs of eternal life.'

What an understanding! what a heart! how low! how narrow! how despicable! that meets the boundless love of God, thus exemplified, with nothing but cavils and objections; that cavils, when it should wonder! that objects, when it should adore! that either proudly slights the immense obligation! or sneakingly pays its thanks for it to a creature!

Let others attack this truth with as much boldness as they please; I thank God for it, I have had the grace, knowing it to be a truth, to defend it with fear and trembling. The infinite dignity of the subject, and the miserable indignity of the preacher, would have held me back, had not an honest zeal, and an unhappy necessity, arising from the odious treatment given in this detestable age to the great fundamentals of our religion, forced me forward. But I will end where St. Augustine began. "After all I have said, I shall neither be grieved, in case I hesitate, to inquire; nor ashamed, in case I mistake, to learn. Furthermore, whosoever hears, or reads, what I have said, where he is alike certain, let him go on with me; where he is alike in doubt, let him search with me; where he discovers his own error, let him return to me; where he discovers mine, let him call me back; so may we, entering the road of charity together, press forward towards him, of whom it is said, 'Seek ye his face' evermore."[a]

And now, O infinitely gracious Being, be pleased so to enlighten our understandings, and move our hearts, that we may both see and feel what we ought to know of thee; and at the same time to bless us with such humility, as may prevent in us the presumptuous sin of all farther inquiries. Grant us this in compassion to our miserable infirmities, for the sake of our dear Redeemer; to whom, with thee, O merciful Father, and thee, O Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

[a] St. Augustine, lib. i. de Trinitate.

DISCOURSE IX.

CHRIST THE TRUE AND PROPER SACRIFICE FOR SIN.

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1 Cor. xv. 22.

As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

With the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity is connected that of Christ's incarnation, and sufferings for the sins of men; and so close and necessary is this connexion, that neither Scripture nor reason will suffer us to receive the one without the other. If Christ had no being before he was conceived in the womb of the Virgin, what sense is there in these and such like expressions? 'A body hast thou prepared for me;' Heb. x. 5. 'He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham,' Heb. ii. 16. 'The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,' John i. 14. And, if he had not a being from all eternity, that is, if he was no more than a creature, he could not make an atonement for the sins of other creatures; for it is, at least, as much as the best creature can do, to be solvent for himself; more, infinitely, than he can do, by his highest merits, to bring in God his debtor for eternal happiness. How, then, can he merit this for another? An angel cannot do it; 'for God chargeth his angels with folly; Job iv. 18. Every creature, as such, is fallible, corruptible, and perishable; 'but we neither were,' nor could have been, 'redeemed with corruptible things—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot;' 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. 'He,' who 'by his blood obtained eternal redemption for us,' Heb. ix. 12, 'is the First and the Last,' Rev. i. 17, and, consequently, neither did nor could sin.

'The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord;' Rom. vi. 23. Sin, we see, is punished with death, that is, with a separation

of soul and body here, and from God both here and hereafter. If the Scripture had not assured us of it, we should, by a parity of reason, have concluded, that righteousness must be rewarded with life, temporal and eternal; because the opposition between sin and righteousness must, according to the rules of justice, be found between the reward of the one, and the punishment of the other.

Here, however, we must distinguish as the apostle hath done, who calls 'death the wages of sin,' because it is deserved; whereas he calls 'eternal life the gift,' and elsewhere 'the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,' because our highest righteousness could never entitle us to it. Although, therefore, the wicked are said to be punished in the strict and proper sense of the word, the happiness, of the righteous is represented not as a proper reward, nor as an effect of justice, inasmuch as they are not properly righteous; but an effect of divine grace and goodness. Yet now, that eternal life or happiness is stipulated for by the covenant, we in some sense ascribe it to justice, and call it a reward.

It is farther to be observed, that if in Adam all die, in him also they must all have sinned, and forfeited their title to eternal life, as the apostle informs us, Rom. v. 12. 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed on all men,' as the wages of sin. On the other hand, 'if in Christ all shall be made alive,' all must first be made righteous in him; because eternal life is the gift of God to righteousness alone. If faith and reformation have qualified us to receive this gift, 'we shall all be made alive at the last day,' that is, shall not only live in a reunion of soul and body, but also in an eternal reunion with God the source of life, through Christ, 'who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.'

If this doctrine is sound and true, it teaches us to believe, that, beside the good or evil of our own actions, the sin of Adam, and the righteousness of Christ, are imputed to all who derive by natural descent under the former, and by grace and faith under the latter. But, for the farther establishment of this doctrine, I shall endeavour, with the assistance of God's word, first to clear the imputation, on which it is founded, of the difficulties wherewith some think

it clogged; and then to prove the satisfaction made for sin, by the death of Christ, so fully, as to leave no doubts on that subject in the minds of my hearers.

In the first place, then, among the many arguments, or rather cavils, raised against this imputation, I shall only take notice of such as the Scriptures seem to give some weight to; for I speak not now to those who reject the Scriptures.

It is objected by some, that justice can never allow one man either to be punished for the sin, or rewarded for the righteousness, of another; and that, accordingly, God tells us by Ezekiel xviii. 20, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.'

These words, and a good deal more in that chapter to the same effect, are God's reply to the Israelites, who, alluding to the second commandment, had said, 'Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' They are likewise a close paraphrase on Deut. xxiv. 16. 'The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children, be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin.' Now as the second commandment, was a part of the moral, so this is a part of the judicial, or civil law given by Moses; and therefore the one is, as to the Mosaic economy, appositely returned in answer to the other. Yet herein it is, by no means said, God will not, in his general and providential economy, 'visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation.' These words of the second commandment must be true, as well as those of the prophet; as true, I mean, in respect to God's providential visitations, as those of the prophet are in respect to the aforementioned precept of the judicial law: which precept is here made the basis, for so much, of a new and spiritual dispensation, namely, of the Christian; for it does not appear, that, from the days of the prophet to those of Christ, the Jews were on a different footing, as to this matter, from that on which they had been before the prophecy was uttered.

This is still made more evident by Jer. xxxi. 29, where the same proverb is objected, and thus answered: 'Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. But every man shall die for his own iniquity; every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt;' ver. 30—32. From hence it is plain, that the entail of punishment is considered as founded on the moral part of the Mosaic dispensation, and the reversal of it promised as a part of the Christian. Experience makes it plain also, that this dispensation of reward or punishment to every man, according to his own deeds, is to be taken in a spiritual sense, and in reference to the equity of a future judgment; for, in this world, Christians, as well as others, suffer, both naturally and providentially, by the iniquity of their fathers. And here it may be observed, that, when Christians are so visited at this day, it is not in consequence of the Christian law; nor does it even seem any otherwise the effect of a particular providence, than as their sins, which have left them nothing but the mere name of Christians, have excluded them from the benefits of the Christian covenant. If such pretended Christians, and real transgressors, lie exposed to the natural course of things, and are made to bear the iniquities of their fathers, as well as their own, this can neither impeach the justice of Providence, nor be so construed as to contradict the sense of the prophets. Enough, I think, hath been said to clear the meaning of both the prophets on this subject.

And now, what, after all, hath this to do with the imputation of Adam's sin? Is there a single word concerning him, his sin, or the imputation of it, in these passages? No; but the same rule of equity, say the objectors, holds good in respect to all fathers, and their children. We must beg their pardon for demurring to this bold assertion; because, as we presently shall see, the case may be so differently circumstanced, as to make a different rule equitable. It will be sufficient for the present to observe, that the case of mere personal sins is very different from that of public

and common sins; and that, although the crimes of a private person are not to be punished in another private person, which is the precise thing forbidden in the twenty-fourth of Deuteronomy, it does not follow, that those of a representative shall in no sense, or degree, be visited on the community he represents.

The other part of this objection, which is purely deistical, appears to have more in it, because it seems to be founded on natural reason and equity. Justice, say the objectors, can never allow one man either to be punished for the sin, or rewarded for the righteousness, of another. But deistical as this argument is, I shall not pass it by unnoticed; because the Arians, and others, pretending to be Christians, having endeavoured to graft it on the Scriptures, press us with it on all occasions.

It is not needful, on either side of this question, to make any distinction between degrees of punishment, or of reward; what is true of one degree being true of all, namely, that it is just or unjust, either fit or unfit, to be the matter of divine appointment. But it ought here to be laid down, that the question is, not whether one man's good or evil actions can become the very actions of another, which none but a fool will affirm; nor whether the merit or demerit of actions can so pass out of one into another, as to become the proper inherent merit or demerit of that other; but whether either may not be justly so imputed to, or entailed on another, as that the other may enjoy the effects of the first, or suffer those of the last, in the same manner as if they were properly his own. In this case, the person to whom the imputation is made, is said to be rewarded or punished; not, I own, in the strict sense of the words, but in a sense of equal significance as to the question in hand, which turns, not on the supposition of a transfer, acknowledged impossible, but on the justice or injustice of an imputation. In speaking to this subject, I shall draw my arguments from known facts, whether civil, natural, providential, or scriptural, as they occur.

And, to begin with the imputation of actual merit, or, according to our state of the question, with that enjoyment of good which one man reaps by the merit of another; we know, that, in most countries, estates and honours are con-

ferred on the son solely for the merit of his father. We know also, that for this, the equity of national communities is never called in question, nor indeed ought to be, since the thing is not unlawful in itself, and may be turned to good account in the society; but more especially since God, in a natural way, does the same. God hath by nature impressed on the heart of a father an ardent love of his son. This puts him on a proportionable endeavour to acquire a fortune for that son; which fortune, so acquired, the son enjoys on a right as indisputable as that of the father who made it, although the son did not labour for it; although perhaps he does not, in any respect, deserve it. What God does thus naturally, he likewise does providentially. The covenant or promise made to David, that 'his children's children should sit on his throne for evermore,' was only on condition that they should keep this covenant on their part, Psal. cxxxii. 11; yet, wicked as Abijam was, 'the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord,' 1 Kings xv. 4, 5. How often do we see, both in sacred and profane history, a whole people blessed for the goodness of their ruler! a people who are wicked, and ripe for that punishment which awaits them at the end of his reign! This sort of imputation, however, is easily admitted, because men are seldom ready to dispute their own title to a benefit.

But the imputation of sin, or what, on the present state of the question, is the same thing, the sharing in the miserable effects of other men's sins, is a doctrine more likely to be questioned. Yet that high treason is a sin, or that forfeiture of estates and titles is a punishment, can hardly be doubted. Now we know there are few countries in the world where this transgression of the father is not deemed justly punished by that forfeiture, as to all his posterity. The whoredom of the father is not only punished by certain disorders inflicted on himself, but visited in a sickly habit of body on his children. The equity of nations, and the natural course of things, which is fixed by the hand of their Creator, hath, we see, made one to suffer for the crimes of another. Wicked princes bring innumerable evils, often total destruction or captivity, on their subjects, in which the children are involved with those of riper years, and the innocent with the guilty. How

often does this happen under ambitious kings, who, having unjustly made war with their neighbours, are worsted, and, in their turns, invaded, to the ruin and desolation of their subjects, as well innocent as guilty! 'The people,' says Horace, 'are punished for the madness of their kings.' 'A whole city,' says Hesiod, 'often suffers on account of one bad man.' This now, whenever it happens, is the necessary consequence of living in society. Yet such is the nature God hath given us, that we cannot live out of society. Wherefore to object this as unjust, is Atheism, or blasphemy. 'I will visit,' saith God in the second commandment, 'the sins of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation.' If men may not in any case justly suffer for the sins of others, why did the hardness of Pharaoh's heart bring so many plagues and deaths on his subjects? Why were the wives and children of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, swallowed up in the earth with those contumacious transgressors? Why were the Israelites, by the appointment of God, worsted in their first attempt on Ai, for the sin of Achan, who had secreted a share of the spoil taken at Jericho? And why was this sin of one imputed or charged, as well as punished, on the people in general, as appears by God's own words on this occasion? 'Israel have sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded; for they have taken the accursed thing, and have stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.' Why was Saul ordered, by the express commandment of God, to extirpate the Amalekites for that which their ancestors had done four hundred years before? Why were the seven sons of Saul hanged in Gibeah, after the death of their father, for his having slain the Gibeonites, and that in order to avert a famine wherewith God had afflicted the Israelites for this crime of their first king? Why is untimely death, and total destruction, prophesied to the family of Jeroboam, for the idolatry of this prince, who himself reigned two and twenty years, and died in his bed? Why is the like foretold to Ahab's posterity, on account of his sins? Why does Zion say, Lam. v. 7, 'Our fathers have sinned, and are not, and we have borne their iniquities.' And, to make an end of instances, why does our Saviour tell

the Jews, Matt. xxiii. 35, 'That upon them shall come all the blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar?' It is true, the Jews, who were thus threatened, deserved the predicted judgments of God for their own sins. But did they not suffer for the cruelty of their ancestors to the prophets, as well as for that which they themselves shewed to Christ and his apostles? Did they not desire, that the blood of Christ should 'fall on them, and their children? And did it not fall in the horrible destruction of their city and nation, so as that all the world may see, to this day, 'they bear the iniquity of their fathers,' as well as their own? It had been foretold indeed, that, under the Christian dispensation, no man should suffer for the sins of another, that is, should judiciously suffer; but the Jews, having rejected that dispensation, could not expect the benefit of this prophetic promise; neither can such pretended Christians, as act against all the laws of Christian charity and equity, and thereby forfeit all the privileges of the covenant they nominally lay claim to.

Thus we see, both in scriptural history, and in the natural course of things, how the entail of guilt and punishment descends on the subjects or posterity of the wicked; to all worldly intents and purposes, just in the same manner as it would do, did the subjects actually sin in their king, and the children in their fathers. These things may seem unaccountable to some; but they cannot appear strange to any who consider, that every age and nation of the world can give instances of the like nature in the ordinary course of things; and therefore we must conclude, that these phenomena of the moral world are as just and fit, though we should be unable to account for them, as those of the physical, whereof human sagacity cannot assign the reasons. Should I trace this matter any farther, it would lead me from my design into a debate with Atheists, whereas my argument is with men who say they are Christians.

The objection being thus answered in general, it is now time to consider it more particularly, as levelled directly against the satisfaction made for sin by the death of Christ. Such is the justice of God, say the objectors, that he could

never have accepted the sufferings of one being as an expiation for the sin of another; and therefore could not have punished his innocent Son for the sins of men.

The antecedent of this argument, when offered by a Deist, must be answered on the footing of natural reason only. But when it is used by such as agree to be concluded by revelation, it ought to be examined by Scripture alone. In the mouths of these men, it manifestly subverts itself; because it strikes directly at the truth of Scripture, which, they say, can neither lie nor err; and flatly contradicts this assertion of the Holy Ghost, 1 Pet. iii. 18, 'Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust (that he might bring us to God), being put to death in the flesh.' It charges all the ancient world, the Hebrews not excepted, with something worse than superstition; nay, and denies that God could have ever instituted the death of a beast, as in any sense propitiatory for the sins of man. If they insist, that these sacrifices were, in themselves, of no value, we shall readily grant they drew their value from somewhat else than the death of a beast, which, simply considered, hath no relation to sin, or the forgiveness of sin. But then it lies as much on the objectors as on us, either to assign or suppose a sufficient end and reason for the divine appointment of rites so operose and expensive as the sacrificial. It can be no more their business than it is ours, till they are ready to avow a yet greater contempt for revelation, to urge a rule against the institution, which if admitted, would prove it absurd and superstitious. To say, the repentance of the offerer gave these sacrifices their value, is saying nothing; for, whatsoever the intrinsic value of repentance is supposed to be, it cannot be increased by a mere external rite of no value. What the rite in that case borrows from repentance, it can by no means repay, at least with any interest, or increase of value, unless it is of some worth in itself; and therefore why superadded? Neither is that plea of any weight, which urges, that this species of worship derived its worth simply from the appointment of God. Would God appoint a rite, which, neither before nor after institution, could answer any good end? No; infinite wisdom never institutes any thing purely for the sake of institution. But he instituted this, say our adversaries, to punish the trans-

gressions, and exercise the obedience, of his people; and, at the same time, to remind them of death, the wages of sin. And were God's people to consider their offerings, that is, their devotions, which ought to flow from piety and love, as a punishment? Were they to look on themselves as doing penance in the loss of their cattle? or to give that for lost, which they presented to God? Again; if these acts of devotion were intended mainly for an exercise of obedience, why was the slaughter of the most harmless animals chosen for this purpose? Why not some other performance, more moral in its tendency, or more demonstrative of submission? In one sense, indeed, the bloody sacrifices must have reminded the assistants of death, as the wages of sin; but, so far as they were encouraged to believe them piacular, they rather gave hopes of exemption from that punishment, than inculcated it as a terror to sin. But, whether it was at all understood, that God instituted any kind of sacrifices for these or the like ends, about which the Scriptures are silent; it is certain, that some of them were set forth, if the strongest terms could do it, as in some sense or measure propitiatory, and that they were so considered by the offerer. But how propitiatory? If one man cannot bear, in any sense, the sins of another, much less surely can a beast. The true end and value of these sacrifices we shall see hereafter. As to that of Christ, let us think what we will of it, we cannot have the confidence to say it was absurd or unjust, till we have first said, and proved, that all sacrifices were such; and, consequently, denied that God ever instituted any. He who makes the Bible his creed, and yet does this, at once owns and denies it to be the word of God.

Nothing can serve so well, as the argument couched in this very objection, either to refute those that bring it, or to establish the doctrine of the satisfaction. The objectors join with us in acknowledging, nay, in strongly asserting, the perfect and sinless innocence of Christ, throughout the whole of his life and conversation. Their very objection is no objection without it. And, that we may see what will be the issue, we join with them in asserting, that the infinitely just God could not have punished his innocent Son for the sins of men. How then are the unexampled sufferings of Christ to be reconciled to this maxim? Is not death the

wages of sin? Is not life, for the same reason, the reward of righteousness? Yet did not his Father send him to suffer death, as well as to preach the gospel? 'Did he not make his soul an offering for sin?' Isa. liii. 10. Was he not 'delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, that he might be taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain?' Acts ii. 23. It was, therefore, surely the will of God, that this his perfectly innocent and well-beloved Son should die the death of a criminal. Now let those who say the innocent cannot justly suffer for the guilty, and that Christ was innocent, reconcile these their assertions with the two passages just now quoted; or account for his death, if they can, on their hypothesis. It is evident at first sight, that they, who deny the doctrine of imputation, can never possibly do this. But we, who maintain that doctrine, are under no difficulty about it, because we say, Christ did not suffer till 'he was made sin for us,' that is, till he, by a voluntary imputation, charged himself with our sins, and thereby became guilty in the eye of the law. If it is true, that the innocent ought not to suffer for the guilty, it is certainly as true, that the innocent ought not to suffer at all, at least by divine appointment. This is one of the fundamental maxims of judicial equity. If Christ, then, suffered, was it for nothing? No. Was it for his own sins? No. Was it for our sins? Here too, the adversaries say, No. But the Scriptures say, Yes; and common sense and equity say, he could not have suffered at the hand of a just and good God for any thing else but sin.

Eusebius, in the tenth book of his Evangelic Demonstration, sets this matter in a very clear and strong light; he clearly shews, I mean, the sense of the church in his days on this head. In treating of the forty-first Psalm, he observes, that Christ, John xiii. 18, applies the ninth verse of that Psalm to himself: 'That the Scripture might be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with me, hath lift up his heel against me.' Having by this shewn, that the Psalm may be understood of our Saviour, who seems to speak from the fourth verse inclusive to the end, he takes notice of these words in that verse; 'Lord, be merciful unto me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee;' and then thus proceeds: 'The Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, was made a

curse for us; him God made sin for us,' although 'he knew no sin,' delivering him as an equivalent price for us all, 'that we might become the righteousness of God in him.' But forasmuch as he, being 'made in the likeness of human flesh, condemned sin in the flesh,' these things are rightly alleged of him. Yet, that he said this (namely, that 'he had sinned') only because he had appropriated our sins to himself through charity and love of mankind, appears from what follows; for he proceeds in the same Psalm, and says, 'Thou hast accepted me in lieu of others, on account of my innocence.'[a] By which words he plainly sets forth the Lamb of God as free from all sin. But how then did he appropriate our sins to himself? How is he said 'to bear our transgressions?' Is it not from hence, that we are said to be his body, as the apostle expresses it, 'Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular?' As also from hence: that, 'while one member suffers, all the members suffer with it?' So, while many members suffer and sin, he also, according to the rules of sympathy (since, being the 'Word of God,' he vouchsafed to 'take on him the form of a servant,' and to be united to mankind in our common tabernacle), took to himself the labours and miseries of the suffering members, made our disorders his own, and, pursuant to the laws of philanthropy, grieves and labours for us all. Nor is this all the Lamb of God hath done for us; for, submitting to the punishment and torment, which he by no means deserved, and which we, for the multitude of our sins, ought to have suffered, he procured us forgiveness of sins, inasmuch as he suffered death in our stead, and transferred to himself the stripes, the reproaches, the contumelies, whereof we were worthy; and, being 'made a curse for us,' drew on himself the curse that was due to us; for what else was he, than the equivalent of our souls? Wherefore the divine oracle saith, 'By his stripes we are healed; and the Lord hath given him up for the iniquities of us all.'[b] It is therefore with good reason that, while he unites himself to us, and us to him, and makes our sins his own, he saith, 'Lord, be merciful to me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.'

To this judicious observation of Eusebius on the forty-

[a] So the Septuagint, quoted by Eusebius, translate the twelfth verse.
[b] Septuagint.

first Psalm, we may add another of our own, to the like effect, on a passage of the fortieth Psalm, wherein, at verse the twelfth, our Saviour saith, 'Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head.' Here it is evident, that he speaks as the head of the church, or as the representative of all mankind; and, in that capacity, charges himself with the guilt of all our sins, though absolutely free from all actual sin. We may justly presume it was because he was innocent of all sin, and yet guilty of all sin, that when Pilate, putting him on his defence, said, 'What hast thou done?' he neither pleaded guilty nor innocent. He could not plead guilty, because he had committed no sin; nor could he plead innocent, because the sins of all men lay on his head. As, therefore, he could not explain this to a Pagan judge, he fulfilled the prophecy, and was silent.

If, as Christians, we can be content to follow the directions of divine revelation, we shall soon see the affair of imputation in such a light, as cannot but reconcile us to it. Revelation represents all the dispensations of God to man, as regulated by covenants. Thus only could we be dealt with as rational, as free, and accountable creatures. Our Maker had a right to impose on us what laws he pleased; but he chose to govern us by the proposal of certain terms and conditions, and left it to our own choice to be so governed, or to abide the consequence, in case of refusal.

The first covenant with Adam, as he was created perfectly innocent, and morally free, was a covenant of works only, and subsisted on a footing of pure justice. 'Abstain from the fruit of the tree, and you shall live,' immortal and happy. 'But, in the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die.' It is plain, beyond all controversy, that this law or covenant included Eve, and all the posterity of Adam, as well as himself; for all were expelled or excluded from paradise on his transgression.

After Adam had transgressed this covenant, and had thereby not only forfeited for himself, and his posterity, the tenure by which life and happiness were granted, but also entailed corruption, and sinful dispositions, on all men; God seems to have made a new covenant of mercy with him and us, whereof his only-begotten Son became even then the

Mediator. Peace could not be restored between God and his rebellious creatures, without atonement and intercession. For this purpose the 'Lamb of our salvation' is said to have been 'slain from the foundation of the world,' Rev. xiii. 8. This was figuratively and prophetically intimated to our first parents by the promise, that 'the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent,' Gen. iii. 15.

Thus the true and great sacrifice, whereby the new covenant was procured and ratified, was, from the fall of man, devoted, and in effect, offered up, that men, now prone to sin, might find means of forgiveness, and not abandon themselves, through despair, to all manner of wickedness. But, till the fulness of time should come, in which the great Sacrifice was to be actually offered, the benefit thereof was applied to them by vicarious and representative sacrifices. That those offered by Abel were instituted with this view, we cannot doubt; first, because they were accepted on account of his faith in Christ Jesus, as St. Paul plainly intimates, Heb. xi. 4, and probably for this reason also, that they were of the bloody kind, and therefore more agreeable both to the institution and the end, than those of Cain, which were only the fruits of the earth; secondly, because mankind could never have thought of such a practice, had it not been prescribed; thirdly, Because the 'blood of beasts could not, of itself, purge sin;' fourthly, Because the same sacrifices under the law appear to have been only typical of the great sacrifice; and, lastly, Because they ceased, when that was slain for the sins of the world. Hence, probably, arose the general prevailing custom of confirming all manner of covenants between kings and nations by sacrifices.

In the covenant which God gave to Noah, after the sins of mankind had brought on the flood, he promises him, and all his posterity, exemption from the like judgment for the future; and forbids them to commit murder, or to eat the blood of beasts, as that 'which maketh an atonement for the soul,' Lev. xvii. 11, by representing the blood of the true sacrifice, or 'of the covenant;' Heb. x. 29, God seems to speak of his dispensation to Noah as of a covenant not altogether new; for he says, 'With thee will I establish my covenant,' Gen. vi. 18. He does not say, I will make a covenant with thee (which is the proper expression to intimate

a covenant not yet heard of); but he says, 'I will establish my covenant;' that is, one should think, I will renew and confirm with thee my covenant of mercy which I gave to mankind after the fall, which they broke, and were therefore destroyed; but whereas you alone have observed it, with you therefore only, and your posterity, will I ratify it. This appears to be that 'everlasting covenant,' which, Isaiah says, 'the inhabitants of the earth had almost universally broken,' Isa. xxiv. 5. We see by what St. Paul says, Heb. xi. 7, 'that Noah became heir of the righteousness which is by faith; that righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all,' Rom. iii. 22. His sacrifices were accepted, it is to be presumed, on account of his faith in the great sacrifice, which alone could recommend them in the sight of God, and give them their 'sweet savour,' Gen. viii. 20, 21.

For the faith of Abraham, 'who looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,' Heb. xi. 10, the Lamb, or he that was to 'bruise the head of the serpent,' and to be 'the blessing of all nations,' was promised particularly to his family, Gen. xxii. 18. Here God promised to Abraham by a covenant, confirmed with an oath, that the great sacrifice should descend from him; and he accordingly went on, applying to himself the benefits thereof by the practice of those vicarious sacrifices, which had been used with that view from the days of Abel. Well might Christ therefore say, 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad,' John viii. 56.

To this covenant, thus carried down, the Mosaic was afterward added, as St. Paul expresses it, Gal. iii. 19. As this is a matter of great consequence, let us hear the apostle's explanation of it in the passage referred to: 'To Abraham, and his seed, were the promises made,' ver. 16.—'But the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ [viz. to Abraham], the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul,' ver. 17. 'Wherefore, then, serveth the law? It was added [to the promise, or covenant] because of transgressions, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made,' ver. 19. Abraham, we see, was by covenant a Christian; for, as the Apostle

says, ver. 8, 'the gospel was preached to him.' Hence we must conclude, that Moses and the Israelites under the law, were, or ought to have been, Christians also; for the promise was still extant in their books, and well understood by their lawgiver and teacher, who wrote them. Nay, the law itself was calculated to instruct them in the knowledge of Christianity: it was 'their schoolmaster to bring them to Christ,' ver. 24. That whole dispensation was so contrived, as to prefigure the Christian, and to serve as 'the shadow of good things to come,' Heb. x. 1, under 'Jesus, who was made a surety of a better testament, or covenant,' Heb. vii. 22. To shew the analogy of every particular, would take up too much time. It is enough to observe, that the piacular sacrifices of the law, more especially the paschal lamb, and the scape-goat, were virtual and efficacious types of Christ. This covenant, it is plain, was made not only with the Israelites then in being, but, through them, with all the succeeding generations of that people.

Several remarks, pertinent to our present purpose, that is, to the imputation of Adam's sin, and of Christ's righteousness, are to be made on these contracts, or covenants.

In the first place, Large bodies of men, of whom few, in comparison, were yet in being, covenanted in a single representative; and were as absolutely tied to the conditions, as if every particular man had personally stipulated for himself.

Secondly, In each covenant, the contracting parties on both sides were so bound, as to become debtors to each other for the articles respectively promised, in case of due performance on the other side. God became debtor to the family or people for certain privileges or blessings, provided they acted up to their engagements, Rom. iv. 4; and the family or people became debtors jointly, as well as severally, for the observation of that which they had promised, Gal. v. 3; and forfeited the benefits of the covenant, as often as they failed of performance.

Thirdly, These covenants, being great and distinguishing blessings, were freely bestowed, and, by the absolute commandment of God, imposed on the other contracting parties, as appears plainly in every one of them, and ex-

pressly in that through Joshua at Jericho: 'Israel hath sinned,' saith God, 'and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them;' Josh. vii. 11.

Fourthly, The representative might forfeit, as in the case of Adam, or secure, as in the case of David, the benefits of the covenant, as well for the people he represented, as for himself.

Fifthly, Every covenant, excepting the first, the parties to which were previously at peace, was ratified by sacrifices, all of them representing the grand sacrifice, whereby the pardon of sin promised, and the peace commenced or renewed, were obtained.

Lastly, The benefits of each covenant, procured by the sacrifice, were restrained to those who embraced that covenant, and, by so doing, entered into an enclosure, or church, from which all recusants were excluded. This God intimates, Psal. l. 5, where he saith, 'Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me with sacrifice.'

As the choice of this conditional method, whereby God was pleased to dispense his favours, was a pure act of goodness and mercy in him, the persons, with whom it was taken, had not only no pretence to dislike the manner of it, but all the reason in the world to be thankful, because it put them on a better footing than formerly, when they were under no contract at all. It was on this footing they received life and being, with all the happiness thereby rendered possible to them, and, if it was not their own fault, easily attainable also. They must therefore have been extremely wanting to themselves, had they not joyfully received the favours of God on the terms he was pleased to grant them, since he might have justly granted none of them on any terms at all.

But now, as to the covenant with Adam, and his posterity, it is to be observed, either that God actually made, or, without injustice, might have made, man naturally mortal; but, as a free act of grace, promised him immortality, in case he should keep the covenant. The covenant, therefore, put him on a better footing than his nature had done, or than any claim he could form, as the creature of God, could do. When he transgressed, he justly forfeited what had been only conditionally promised; and, instead of con-

tinuing to be an object of grace and favour, and consequently of living for ever, he sunk into an object of justice, and died, like other animals, the death his nature seems to have marked him out for. If it was a free act of goodness in God to annex eternal life to the observation of his covenant, it was surely but an act of justice in him to resume the grant from all men, on the disobedience of their representatives; and the rather, because they also became disobedient, and seconded what he had done by their own actual sins.

Howsoever we may be obliged to answer to the Deists for the reasonableness of this doctrine, there can certainly be no room for a debate about it among ourselves. Are we not agreed, that Adam was created innocent; that he was placed in paradise, that is, in a state of worldly felicity; that he held his tenure of life, and that happiness, on the covenanted condition of obedience; and that he forfeited his tenure, at least for himself, by transgression? But how came his children, yet unborn, to be shut out of paradise? If he did not forfeit for them, as well as for himself, why were they not all admitted, and blessed with that happy condition, till their own sins expelled them? Is not that infant, who hath as yet committed no sin, a fit inhabitant for paradise? If he is, why was not that happy place reserved for him? Paradise was not made for, nor the covenant established with, Adam alone. Had not Adam sinned, he had been alive, and happy in that garden of delights, to this day, with all his posterity about him, in case they likewise had all of them kept the covenant. But, instead of enjoying this happy state, or even having the benefit of a trial for it, our right to either was nulled, and paradise itself demolished, long before we were in being. Nay, what is worse, all men are become subject to miseries of a thousand kinds, to sickness, and to death (to say nothing of that which introduces death), and that by a necessity of nature, which they cannot possibly elude; a necessity of nature, some way or other brought upon them ere they can distinguish good from evil. If paradise was destroyed, only because God foresaw no human creature should be so pure from sin as to deserve admission there, how came this to pass? Did the sin of Adam corrupt all his posterity? Or do they cor-

rupt themselves, as he did? Who then corrupts the new-born infant? Or, if he is not corrupt, why is he not in paradise? Nay, why is he subject to sickness and death? If the scriptural history of our first parents is true, there is no answering these questions, founded on that history, and on facts universally notorious, but by admitting, that Adam not only covenanted and forfeited for all mankind, but likewise entailed on all men the sinful dispositions of his own corrupted nature. And what is there absurd in the supposition of his having so covenanted and forfeited? Why might not God have granted a tenure of paradise to him, and his heirs, on the same terms as absolute princes frequently do the property of their own lands? Such a prince, out of his singular favour, conveys an estate by patent to a particular subject, and his heirs for ever, on condition that he and they shall always render him such and such services. If that subject fails to render him those services, it is but reasonable and just that the grant should become void, as well in respect to his descendants, as himself. But, in case the grantee shall take up arms against his prince, and lead his children into rebellion; or, together with them, shall otherwise violate the laws of that prince; hath he not a right to put the severity of those laws in force against such subjects? Now it was on a like tenure that God granted paradise and immortality to the first man, and his heirs; and it was by a like failure, and rebellion, that this tenure was lost.

Dr. Sherlock, in his most excellent treatise on Death, hath so well applied the reasonings of St. Paul to the support of this doctrine, that I must beg leave to give you an extract of those reasonings, as exhibited by that truly pious and judicious divine:

"The sentence of death and mortality," saith he, "which was pronounced on Adam, fell on all his posterity. St. Paul tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22, 'That by man came death; and in Adam all die;' which he does not only assert, but prove, Rom. v. 12—14: 'Wherefore by man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all; for that all have sinned; for, until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed where there is no law; nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.'

The design of all which is to prove, that men die, or are mortal, not for their own sins, but for the sins of Adam; which the Apostle proves by this argument; because, though all men, as well as Adam, have sinned, yet, till the giving the law of Moses, there was no law which threatened death against sin, but only that law given to Adam in paradise, which no man else ever did, or ever could transgress, but he. Now sin is not imputed where there is no law; that is, is not imputed to any man to death, before there is any law which threatens death against it.—Upon what account, then, says the Apostle, could these men die, who lived between Adam and Moses, before the law was given which threatens death? And yet die they did; even those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. This could have been for no sin but Adam's, who sinned, and 'brought death into the world, and so death passed upon all men.' To hinder this from seeming hard, he shews, that all men are, through their bodies, naturally mortal; that they held immortality only on such terms as God was pleased to bestow it; that they forfeited that tenure by the transgression of their common parent and representative; and that as Adam, now corrupt, could beget none but corrupt children, immortality became here unreasonable and impossible, through the universal prevalence of sin."

Thus, I apprehend, are we said to sin and die in Adam. So much for the introduction and imputation of sin.

It is now time to turn our eyes on the introduction and imputation of righteousness by Christ Jesus. When Christ came into the world, he was so far from departing from this method of dealing with us by covenant, that all he did terminated in the re-establishment and completion of the covenant between God and us, which had been prophetically and typically introduced after the fall, and in different periods of the world, from that time to his incarnation, occasionally diversified as to its outward form; but, at every change, still rendered more plain and intelligible by the new promises or institutions wherewith it was accompanied. What Solomon said concerning the way of the just man, may be very properly applied to the gospel; namely, that, 'like the shining light, it hath shined more and more unto the perfect day. St. Paul, who speaking of it as literally and fully

preached by Christ, calls it, with Jeremiah, 'a new covenant,' in contradistinction to that of the law, gives it nevertheless a much higher date, as revealed to Abraham, nay, and even as believed in by Noah and Abel.

Of this covenant Christ, by his mission, became the Messenger, and, by his death, the Mediator. In pursuance of his mission, he preached the kingdom of heaven, or the new and holy community of believers. By his death he purchased this kingdom, community, or church; and therein acquired a right to mediate a peace between his offended Father and mankind, who had been enemies and aliens by wicked works. This peace he settled by the covenant founded in his blood, which was the grand sacrifice or atonement made to divine justice for the transgression of the first covenant, whereby Adam had rendered all his posterity both imputative and actual sinners. In this covenant, heaven, or eternal life, is promised on God's part; while repentance, faith, and peace with him and one another, are promised on ours. In order to bring the parties to this blessed agreement, Christ pleaded with his Father the merits of that sacrifice or price he had paid for us; and he pleaded with men the infinite benefits arising from the covenant, if embraced and kept. Having by these means gathered together a church, he became, of course, the guarantee and sponsor to us of his Father's promises; and to his Father, for our faith and obedience.

As Adam, immediately on the establishment of the first covenant, became thereto a debtor; and, by his transgression thereof, rendered himself, and all his unhappily corrupted descendants, insolvent debtors; so Christ, the head, the father, the representative, and sponsor, of the church, having paid this debt both of entailed and actual sin, hath, according to the promise of Isaiah, 'proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.' He hath, by an infinitely gracious exchange, imparted his merits to us, and taken our demerits to himself; for 'his Father hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;' 2 Cor. v. 21. His being made sin for us, or, as our sponsor, taking our sins on himself, is farther explained and proved, Isa. liii, where, concerning him and us, it is said, 'All we, like sheep, have gone astray: we have turned every one to

his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He hath poured out his soul unto death: he was numbered with the transgressors; he bare the sin of many; and made intercession for the transgressors.' In the Epistle to the Galatians, iii. 13, St. Paul strongly enforces the same doctrine: 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' St. Peter, speaking of Christ, says, 'He, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed;' 1 Pet. ii. 24. That we are made the righteousness of God in Christ, appears from other places besides this alleged. We are told, Rom. v. 18, 19, that, 'by the righteousness of one,' namely, Christ, 'the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life;' and that, 'by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.'

It is a gross absurdity to suppose we can rightly conceive of the Christian religion without a right idea of our redemption; for that religion, and that redemption, are but one and the same thing. It is equally absurd to talk of redemption, without acknowledging two things; first, that Christ, in order to reclaim us, gave us his word, his ordinances, and his Spirit; and, secondly, that he suffered death, to save us from that death which is the wages or punishment of sin. For, having done these two things, he is called Jesus, or our Saviour. Now the atonement made by his death is nonsense, without the supposition of a double imputation; first, of sin in Adam; and, secondly, of righteousness in Jesus Christ. Our adversaries will gain nothing by denying the first, because they cannot but own, that we are by nature corrupt and sinful; that God did not make us so; and that this natural corruption, which is worse than the entail of Adam's sin, was brought upon us by one man, namely, by Adam. It is in vain to say every man corrupts himself; for, if all men had not a natural and previous disposition to corruption, some men might happen not to corrupt themselves; neither would children shew a tendency to vice, as they all do, from the time they are able to speak and act; much less would they be subject to pain, sickness, and death, were they entirely free from sin, it being impossible the innocent should suffer. 'Who dares deny,' saith

St. Augustine, 'that Christ is the Saviour of infants? But how is he said to save them, if there is in them no distemperature of original sin? How does he redeem them, if they are not, by their original, sold under the sin of the first man?'

But here it is worth observing, that though children, dying unbaptized, die formal heirs to Adam, having no other covenant but his, under which they can derive; yet, as they have neither transgressed that covenant by actual sin, nor rejected the new one, we may presume they are actual objects, at least, of God's uncovenanted mercy; or I should rather say, as Adam's transgression was imputed to them without a voluntary act of their own, so Christ's merit is imputed to them, without the requisition of any such act; because it is to be laid down for a maxim, that, in respect to souls, circumstanced as theirs are, Christ came to undo whatsoever Adam did. Nay, he came to do more; for, as it is not in the power of man to do so much evil as God is both able and willing to do good, so our blessed Saviour came to bestow heaven on those whom Adam had deprived of paradise only.

Since, then, the sin and corruption of our first parents are entailed on us; and experience tells us, we can neither retrieve ourselves from sin, nor save our souls from the punishment of sin; we stand in need of a Redeemer who is able to do both; who can cure the disorders of our minds by divine wisdom, and clear the debt that is against us by an equivalent price. This Christ alone was able to do, both because he was 'the wisdom of God,' 1 Cor. i. 24, and, through the sinless purity of his nature, and the infinite dignity of his person, could lay down a sufficient ransom for us. 'Such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as the high-priests of the law did, to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself;' Heb. vii. 26, 27. But farther; as it is not enough barely to be forgiven, in order to our exaltation to a state of glory, to which no merit of our own can ever entitle us; we must borrow the merit necessary to that purpose from our representative, and found our title to so great a reward on the covenant he hath procured for us.

On the whole of this matter; whosoever conceives any other system of redemption than that which is here set forth, draws it from his own imaginations and prejudices; by no means from the word of God. The fifth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans alone is sufficient to establish what I have maintained. Whosoever candidly considers the doctrine therein laid down, from the sixth verse inclusive, to the end, will plainly see, that 'for us, ungodly, and destitute of strength to help or redeem ourselves, Christ died; that herein God commendeth his love towards us, who were yet sinners; that if his love so abounded towards us, even when we were in sin,' and unredeemed, we may hope for a still greater degree of it, now that 'we are justified by the blood of his Son,' which is sufficient 'to save us from his wrath;' that if, 'when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, we have much greater reason to hope,' after such a reconciliation, 'to be saved by his life;' that we have not only cause of hope, but 'of joy in God, through Christ, having already received the atonement.' The candid reader of this passage, having thus seen the redemption of man through the blood of Christ enlarged on, will be farther instructed by a comparison drawn between Christ and Adam, which will shew him how sin and death came into the world by means of the one; and how they are to be taken out of it again by means of the other: 'By one man,' saith the Apostle, 'sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Although sin is not imputed where there is no law, nevertheless death (through the breach of the first law) reigned from Adam to Moses, even over such as had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him,' that is, Christ, 'who was to come;' for he represented, and covenanted for, all mankind; insomuch that 'since by this man came death, by man,' namely Christ, 'came also the resurrection of the dead;' 1 Cor. xv. 21. However, though they are alike in this, that they both communicated an entail, the former of sin, and the latter of grace, to all who derive under them respectively; yet they differ in this, that we have less reason to complain, if, 'through the offence of one, many should have died,' inasmuch as all have sinned, than we have to rejoice, and be thankful, for 'the grace af-

forded to many through one,' since that grace 'was a free gift,' bestowed on persons no way resembling the donor in righteousness; through whose righteousness, nevertheless, if it is not their own fault, 'they may reign in life eternal.' But to conclude; 'as, by the offence of one,' the first Adam, 'judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one,' the last Adam, 'the free gift came upon all men unto the justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.'

Here the doctrine of the satisfaction is expressly asserted, and the parallel between Christ and Adam, between grace and guilt, between life and death; as also between the free gift of grace and life through Christ on the one side, and the entail of sin and death through Adam on the other; is too clearly stated not to convince us, who submit our private opinions to the word of God, that, by nature, we inherit the guilt and punishment of Adam, and, by adoption, the righteousness and reward of Christ; that, according to my text, as in Adam we all die, so in him we must all have sinned, death being the consequence of sin only; and that as in Christ we shall all be made alive, so in him we must all be first rendered righteous, because life is the effect, or reward, of righteousness alone.

It is true, indeed, that actual, rivets the imputation of original, sin; as, on the other hand, repentance and faith secure to us the imputation of Christ's merit. He who sins, consents to what Adam did, and makes himself a party with the father and representative of sinners. He who repents and believes under the Christian covenant, makes himself a party with the father and representative of believers. The sinner inherits death under Adam; and the believer life under Christ. Either inheritance is chosen by an actual, and strengthened by an habitual, imitation of him who established the original title. The natural birth is the initial form whereby possession of the former, and the new birth in baptism that whereby possession of the latter, is conveyed. To this we must particularly attend, because it depends on ourselves to make good our title through Christ; and, therefore, we are exhorted by St. Peter, 'to give diligence, that we may make our calling and election sure.'

The satisfaction made for sin by the death of Christ, is, I think, sufficiently proved already in this Discourse; but, whereas that is a subject of infinite importance, and much disputed, I should, according to the second head proposed in this Discourse, proceed to a more full and ample proof of it, were it not that I have taken up too much of your time with the first. For this reason I shall defer this proof to another occasion:

Humbly beseeching him, in the mean time, who 'giveth us the victory over death, through our Lord Jesus Christ,' that he would make us truly thankful for this great mercy, and inspire our minds with the true principles of eternal life promised to us in and through his Son, and our Saviour; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE X.

CHRIST THE TRUE AND PROPER SACRIFICE FOR SIN.

1 COR. xv. 22.

As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

TAKING it for granted, that, in my former Discourse on these words, the doctrine of imputation, both as to the sin of Adam, and the righteousness of Christ, was sufficiently established on a scriptural foundation, against the only objections that seemed materially to affect it; I shall endeavour in this more fully to prove from Scripture, that Christ hath not only made satisfaction to his offended Father, for our sins, by his blood, so as to exempt us from the punishment of sin; but hath also, by the merits of his obedience, perfected in the reproachful death of the cross, and, through faith imputed to us, entitled us to eternal life, or the full reward of that righteousness, which results from a strict observance of the divine law in all its parts. After this, I shall

endeavour to shew on what terms these inestimable blessings are offered to us by the evangelical dispensation.

That we may proceed in this matter with the greater clearness and certainty, let us consider, first, that the holy and good God hates sin; that 'he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that he cannot even look on iniquity,' Hab. i. 13; secondly, that 'there is no peace between God and the wicked,' Isa. xlviii. 22; but 'indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, denounced against every soul that doth evil,' Rom. ii. 8, 9; and, thirdly, that we, being born under the breach of God's covenant, and universally prone to wickedness, are, in the eye of Divine justice, 'all concluded under sin,' Gal. iii. 22; and, consequently, 'by nature the children of wrath,' Eph. ii. 3; and 'strangers from the covenants of promise,' ver. 12. In the next place, let us consider what are the effects of this indignation and wrath thus threatened on account of the natural state of sin into which we are born, and wherein we must unavoidably continue, if we are not born again unto a new and better life. They are, exclusion from the sight and enjoyment of God, together with death temporal and eternal. 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;' Heb. xii. 14. 'The wages of sin is death;' Rom. vi. 23. 'The wicked shall go away into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil, and his angels;' Matt. xxv. 41. Such is the state we are in by nature; and such must be its end, if God do not deliver us from it. 'Without him we can do nothing,' John xv. 5; 'for we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;' 2 Cor. iii. 5. Every text here quoted might be supported with many others, equally express and plain, whereby it might appear, that we are 'by nature the servants of sin,' Rom. vi. 17; that we were 'sold under sin,' vii. 14; that we were 'set at a distance from God,' Eph. ii. 13; and that we were 'alienated from him, and enemies in our minds, by wicked works;' Col. i. 21.

Now if it shall appear as plainly from the same Scriptures, that Christ hath taken our sins on himself; hath suffered the punishment appointed for them by the justice of God in order to set us free; and hath, by his covenant, imparted his own righteousness to us; and if it shall also appear, that God, on this account, hath been reconciled to us, and adopted

us for his children and heirs; this ought surely to end all disputes about the doctrine of the satisfaction among Christians, and free that doctrine from every opposer, but the open and professed Deist.

To prove the first of these points, it will be necessary to consider what is meant in holy Scripture by a sacrifice for sin, especially when Christ is represented as such. The common method of doing this is, by weighing the nature and end of the piacular sacrifices under the law, in order to come at the right notion of the great sacrifice, and its effects. And whereas the Septuagint translators were obliged to give, for the Hebrew terms relating to this subject, such Greek ones as expressed the same intent or effect in the Gentile way of worship; which Greek terms, so applied in that translation, the penmen of the New Testament made use of in quoting the Old, and in writing to both the Jews and Gentiles; it hath also been thought expedient to search the ancient Pagan writers for the true sense of these terms. The method is good in respect to the one course of inquiry as well as the other, and can hardly deceive him who pursues it with candour and diligence. But we have a shorter and surer method, as you shall presently perceive.

However, as to this longer one, no ordinary reader of the Greek classics can help observing, that they considered the Deity as angry at their crimes, and disposed to punish them; that they offered sacrifices to appease his wrath, and avert its penal effects; and that they regarded those sacrifices as representatives of the transgressor, and slain in his stead. He who, having observed this (which Grotius and Lomierus will help him to do), casts his eyes afterward over the Greek of the Old and New Testament, cannot but take notice, that the same terms used by the Greek Pagans, in speaking of their sacrifices, for remission, redemption, expiation, atonement, &c. are applied to the piacular sacrifices treated of in both Testaments, not only without any warning given to the Gentile reader of a change of meaning, but evidently to the same effect, and in the same sense; as appears almost every where by the context, and by the confidence which the performers of these sacred rites appear always to have reposed in them. On the modest supposition, that the Holy Spirit, in writing to the Gentile reader in terms familiar to that

reader, did not intend to impose on him, we must take it for granted, since no new sense is professedly given to those terms in Scripture, that they are to be understood in the old ordinary sense. Lucian, who had read the Scriptures, must have thus understood them, or he could not have said that Christ, by the punishment of the cross, had introduced into Palestine a new sacrifice or expiation.

We will now suppose a Greek reader of the Old Testament to have taken the Septuagint translation into his hands, in order, by a search into that, on the strength of his acquaintance with the terms relating to sacrifices, to find out the meaning of what is said in the New, concerning the great sacrifice. In the book before him, he sees God's anger strongly expressed. He sees also the sacrifice of bulls, goats, rams, lambs, &c. appointed by the law to atone for sin, and appease the wrath of God, not only for small sins, or sins of ignorance, but for great and wilful sins, such as denying a deposit, robbery, and perjury, even after the delinquent had repented, and made restitution, Lev. vi. 6, 7. He sees, by some instances, particularly by that of the scapegoat, Lev. xvi. 21, that the animal offered was put in the place of the offerers, and bore their sins, just as the piacular sacrifices of the Pagans were supposed to do. And, farther, he sees these sacrifices actually taking effect; and the death of men averted by the sacrificial death of beasts, as in the atonement made by Aaron, Num. xvi. 47, 48; in the sacrifice offered by David at the threshing-floor of Araunah, 2 Sam. xxiv. and in various other instances.

But, in the midst of all this, his reason tells him, that a beast can in reality by no means be made guilty of sin, nor become a true and proper sacrifice for the transgressions of men, because utterly unequivalent. The Scriptures of the Old Testament strongly intimate, and those of the New expressly tell him, the same thing; namely, that 'the blood of bulls and goats cannot possibly take away sins;' Heb. x. 4.

Here it is natural for him to inquire how this seeming contradiction may be reconciled; which if he does, he will perceive, by what St. Paul says in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the sacrifices of the law were in themselves of no value; but rendered, however, in a certain degree, efficacious, as types and shadows of good things to come, that is, of the

true and great sacrifice offered up by Christ; chap. x. 1, &c. In the New Testament he will find all the terms relating to propitiatory sacrifices, made use of by the Septuagint translators, so applied to the death of Christ on the cross, as to give no room for a suspicion, that they are not there applied in their strict and proper sense.

On this occasion he will observe, what I hinted just now, that there was no need to take such a compass to come at the right notion of the great sacrifice exhibited in the New Testament. He will be convinced, that, in all his long inquiry, he had been only endeavouring to trace the substance by the shadow, when the substance itself was openly offered to his view, in such a manner, as to throw light on the piacular sacrifices of that figurative dispensation, through which he had preposterously chosen to examine it. The true intent and use of Christ's sacrifice is to be sought in the plain and literal account which he and his apostles give of it, rather than in the darkness of the legal symbols appointed to prefigure it. The Jews, indeed, as St. Paul observes, might have been thus led by the law, 'as by a schoolmaster, to Christ;' but we, who have been taught better things, ought not to use so faint a candle to find out what we seek, in the full light of the gospel. The justness of this assertion you will quickly be made sensible of by an easy method, which leaves no room for mistakes.

You have seen already, that God, as a just Governor of the world, hates sin, is angry with those who commit it, and, consequently, disposed to punish it in the guilty. But the same Scriptures that tell you this, tell you also that he is merciful; and hath made an atonement for sin in the blood of his Son Christ Jesus, who hath taken our sins upon him; suffered the punishment due to them; and, if we are not wanting to the conditions required of us, as effectually cleared us in the sight of God, as if we had never transgressed.

Now, that Christ was the true propitiation, the real original atonement for sin, you may perceive; because those essential properties of a sacrifice, which were only either imaginarily, or, at best, but representatively, in other sacrifices, are really found in this, and in this alone.

First, Christ was a voluntary victim, who, from the be-

ginning, devoted himself to death for his church; which no other victim ever had a right to do, because no other was the proprietor of its own life. Wherefore, he saith, 'I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep;' John x. 11. 'I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again;' ver. 17, 18.

Secondly, Christ was a victim of a sufficient value. It is not possible the blood of any other, such as of bulls and goats, should take away sins. 'Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifices and offering (of beasts) thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings, and sacrifices for sin, thou hast had no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God;' Heb. x. 5—7. Thus we see, that, other sacrifices being of themselves of no value, Christ comes to perfect the purpose of those sacrifices, and to 'fulfil the law,' as he says himself, Mat. v. 17; in order to which, we see also there is a body prepared for him, that he might be capable of those sufferings, whereto his divinity giving sufficient dignity, the sacrifice becomes equivalent.

Thirdly, According to the property of a true sacrifice, he exchanged places and conditions with us. 'He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that through him the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, and that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith;' Gal. iii. 14. 'He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;' 2 Cor. v. 21.

Fourthly, The sacrifice made by Christ was, in a strict and true sense, propitiatory: 'We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins;' 1 John ii. 1, 2. 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son for the propitiation of our sins;' 1 John iv. 10, 'by whom we have now received the atonement;' Rom. v. 11. In these expressions the genuine effect of a true sacrifice is asserted in the terms of the Old Testament, but here applied in their proper and immediate sense.

Lastly, The grand end of a propitiatory sacrifice, namely, peace and reconciliation with the offended Deity, is also strongly and expressly asserted in many places; whereof I shall at present only instance two, because they are full and clear enough to serve for a thousand. Daniel predicts his coming, when he was 'to finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and to be cut off, but not for himself;' and, having offered up the great efficacious sacrifice, was to cause the typical sacrifice, the representative oblation, to cease; Dan. ix. 24. 26, 27. 'It pleased the Father,' saith St. Paul, 'that in him (Christ) should all fulness dwell, and (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were some time alienated, and enemies in your minds, by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreproachable, in his sight;' Col. i. 19—22. In these remarkable passages, the terms properly relative to the great and real sacrifice are made use of in their true and genuine import. The parties, God and man, formerly at enmity through the sins of the latter, are here represented as reconciled, and at peace, by the sacrifice of the cross, or the blood of Christ. Here the true sacrifice is represented to us as cut off, not for his own sins, but to make reconciliation for our sins; on which all other sacrifices were, of course, to be done away. This, I think, is sufficient to establish the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction for sin, without going farther.

But, as the adversaries of this comfortable truth have, with amazing assurance, endeavoured to puzzle this controversy with I know not what forced interpretations of all the sacrificial terms thus applied to Christ as the true and proper sacrifice; I shall now enforce that truth by scriptural quotations, couched in terms so common, and so universally understood, as to take away all pretence of doubt or debate among such as retain any sense of shame.

'The Lord,' saith Isaiah, chap. liii. 6, 'hath laid on him [Christ] the iniquity of us all;' and, ver. 12, 'He bare the sin of many. He, his own self, bare our sins in his body on the tree;' 1 Pet. ii. 24. 'Christ was once offered, to bear

the sins of many,' Heb. ix. 28. 'He who knew no sin, was made sin for us,' 2 Cor. v. 21. 'He was also made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree,' Gal. iii. 13. Thus it is plain he took our sins to himself.

And it is as plain, that he endured the punishment of those sins, which 'is death,' Rom. vi. 23; 'for he hath tasted of death for every man,' Heb. ii. 9. 'In due time Christ died for the ungodly,' Rom. v. 6. 'Died for our sins,' 1 Cor. xv. 3. Thus was he, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, chap. liii. 5, 'wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him; for the transgression of God's people was he stricken,' ver. 8; 'and his soul was made an offering for sin,' ver. 10.

Christ, having taken our sins on himself, and suffered the punishment due to them by the law of God, hath paid our debt, and set us, who were sold under sin, at liberty. He who denies this, 'denies the Lord that bought him,' 2 Pet. ii. 1; 'that bought him with a price,' 1 Cor. vi. 20; 'that purchased him with his own blood,' Acts xx. 28. 'that came, as the Son of man, to give his life a ransom for him, and for many,' Matt. xx. 28. 'that he might thereby proclaim liberty to the captives, Luke iv. 18. 'and deliver them out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will,' 2 Tim. ii. 26.

Our Saviour, who hath, as you hear, made our sins his own, suffered for them, and paid the debt of sin, under which we were sold, is also represented as washing and cleansing us from all sin in his blood: 'If we walk in the light,' saith St. John, 1 Epist. i. 7, 'the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanseth us from all sin. For he hath washed us from our sins in his own blood,' Rev. i. 5. 'If the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God!' Heb. ix. 13, 14. Our blessed Saviour, having thus by himself, purged our sins, 'sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,' Heb. i. 3.

Now, there is no darkness or equivocation in these ex-

pressions. They give us the strongest assurances of pardon and remission of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. As 'almost all things were, by the law, purged with blood; and as, without shedding of blood there is no remission; it was therefore necessary, that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these'—that is, by the blood of Christ, 'who now once, in the end of the world, hath appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,' Heb. ix. 22, 23. 26. 'by which blood he hath entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us,' ver. 12. 'For his sake God hath forgiven us,' Eph. iv. 32. 'We all have sinned—but are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath taken to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past,' Rom. iii. 23—25. 'Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins.—Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you,' Acts xiii. 38. 40, 41.

That both the meaning and truth of all this may be ascertained by suitable effects; in the first place, the enmity between God and us is abolished in the flesh of Christ—Peace is made, 'and both Jew and Gentile are reconciled unto God in one body by the cross of Christ, having slain the enmity thereby,' Eph. ii. 15, 16. 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;' Rom. viii. 16, 17. We, therefore, have infinite reason to give 'thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins,' Col. i. 12—14.

After having thus seen the 'Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world,' Rev. xiii. 8. 'taking away the sin of the world,' John i. 29. and 'putting away sin by the sa-

crifice of himself,' Heb. ix. 26. are we not to conclude, that he was, to all intents and purposes, a true, proper, and efficacious, propitiation for the sins of men? But, if there are men of so perverse a turn of mind, as to refine away such glaring proofs by a forced construction of all the terms relating to sacrifices in every language, dead as well as living, surely even they ought to be convinced, when they see the doctrine of the satisfaction asserted by the Scriptures, not only in what they would represent as technical and learned terms, but in common words, understood alike by all men; such as, Christ taking our sins on himself, enduring the punishment of those sins, paying our debt or ransom, washing and cleansing us in his blood, and thereby obtaining redemption and remission of sins for us. Can a doctrine, set in such a variety of lights, fail to strike every one? If one manner of expressing it seems obscure or doubtful, are there not a hundred others, all enlightening and urging the same point, to direct us? The Scriptures, indeed, have left no room for debates on this important article, among sensible and well-meaning Christians.

But there are those among us, who, pretending to be Christians, will not be concluded by the word of God, which saith, 'Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh;' 1 Pet. iii. 18. The strictness of law and justice, they say, require that the delinquent only should suffer for his offences, and not another who is guiltless. Why, then, did Christ suffer, who committed no sin? The Scriptures, however, in one sense, represent us as suffering for our own sins, in Christ our head; for, as 'by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body' [of Christ], 1 Cor. xii. 13. 'and so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death,' Rom. vi. 3. it appears, that we have legally suffered and died in him our head. The strictest justice charges the sin of every offence committed by the members, on the head; so that when that is cut off, the whole body is punished. These, our adversaries will say, are figurative expressions, only representing a death unto sin. We grant the Scriptures speak figuratively, when they tell us we are one being, or one body, with Christ; but it must be observed, that they call this 'a great mystery,' Eph. v. 32, and

lay too great a stress on it, to leave room for a supposition, that they mean it for nothing but a bare similitude. All the real members of Christ's mystical body are so closely joined to him by love or charity, that whatsoever he suffers, they must suffer with him, through that tender sense of gratitude which makes them feel in him, as he does through compassion in them. If the love between Christ and his church is reciprocal, neither can suffer apart. Every Christian, in proportion to the degree of piety he is warmed with, must take a greater or less share in those persecutions, those buffetings, those spittings, and that horribly contemptuous and painful death, which his Saviour endured. I must needs say, he hath little Christianity, little right in Christ, to whom this is not a severe and terrible suffering. That man only, who, from a mixture of compunction and gratitude, thus sympathizes in the pangs of his Redeemer, can be said to have been 'planted in the likeness of his death,' to have 'crucified the old man,' and to have been 'dead with Christ;' he only can be 'dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,' Rom. vi. 5, 6. 8. 11. He never truly repented, who never truly pledged his Saviour in the cup imbittered with the infusion of death. He never saw his sins in their true scarlet, who hath not yet read the catalogue of them written in the blood of Christ. We are baptized into the death of Christ, that we may die to sin, as he did for it. But, we may assure ourselves, it is impossible to die effectually to sin, with partaking in the mortal agonies of him who died for it. He is not a real member of Christ's body, who does not in some measure feel those agonies, and, in them, the heinousness of sins, thus only to be felt at the point of their sting.

Having, I hope, sufficiently proved, that Christ hath, by his blood, made a full atonement or satisfaction for the sins of men, I shall now endeavour, as briefly as I can, to shew, that he hath imparted his own righteousness to us. If we embrace his covenant, we are, by the former, exempted from the punishment of sin; and by the latter, entitled to the reward appointed by the law of God for those who keep his commandments.

The Scriptures, after telling us that 'we are justified,' that is, cleared and acquitted, by the blood of Christ, Rom.

v. 9. do farther assure us, as of a much higher blessing, that 'we are sanctified,' or made holy, also, 'by the same blood,' Heb. x. 29. 'Christ so loved the church, that he gave himself [died] for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water, by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish,' Ephes. v. 25—27.

The Scriptures likewise give us to understand, that Christ's righteousness is communicated to us. 'Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe,' Rom. iii. 21, 22. For this purpose it was that 'Christ was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Christ Jesus,' we are told, 'is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,' 1 Cor. i. 30. So that, by his obedience, many are made righteous,' Rom. v. 19. 2 Cor. v. 21. 'Thus hath he by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified,' Heb. x. 14.

The happy effect of this sanctification through the blood of Christ is eternal life. 'We are hereby made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;' we are 'hereby not only delivered from the power of darkness, but translated into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood,' Col. i. 12—14. The gift of God is eternal life, through Christ,' Rom. vi. 23. who saith, 'Whoso drinketh my blood hath eternal life,' John vi. 54. But, 'forasmuch as we are baptized into Christ,' and, by the new covenant, made one body with him, we are thereby fully assured both of holiness and happiness. Whosoever is joined to Christ, is governed by his holy will, and must be happy with him; for he saith, 'If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him shall my Father honour,' John xii. 26. 'Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me;—and that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them,' John xvii. 24. 26.

On the whole, it may be observed, that as the blood of the paschal lamb distinguished between the Israelites and the Egyptians, and preserved the former from the hand of that angel who destroyed the latter; so the blood of Christ, the Lamb of our salvation, wherewith the true believers are sprinkled, distinguishing them from such as reject it, preserves their souls from that other destroyer, who is not content with the death of the body only; and by so doing, is compared, 1 Cor. v. 7, to the passover, where, in the proper sense of the word, Christ is set forth as our sacrifice; 'Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.' To denote his personal innocence, he is represented by the figure of a lamb; and, to denote the imputed guilt for which he died, he is here, and in I know not how many other places, expressly called a sacrifice. He is the 'Lamb slain,' by stipulation with his Father, and by promise to Adam, 'from the foundation of the world,' Rev. xiii. 8. He is the 'Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,' John i. 29. He is 'that Lamb, in whose blood,' and not their own, high as its estimation is in the sight of God, the martyrs, who were 'clothed in white,' had 'washed their robes,' Rev. vii. 14. Since they who were baptized in their own blood, stood in need of his to purify and whiten their garments, we are not to be surprised, that the blood of Jesus Christ should be necessary 'to cleanse us from all sin;' 1 John i. 7. that 'not we, but he himself, must purge our sins,' Heb. i. 3. 'and our conscience from the guilt of dead works,' Heb. ix. 14. On these accounts, and for these blessed purposes, it is that we are told, 'He loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God,' Ephes. v. 2.

It now remains to be shewn, on what terms the inestimable blessings and benefits of Christ's death are offered to us by the gospel dispensation. This will not take up much time; although it is very necessary to be clearly ascertained, that a mistaken dependence on the blood and merits of Christ may not encourage us to sin, as our adversaries object it does, and as it hath actually done in some.

Christ is compared, Heb. ix. 13, 14, as a more true and perfect sacrifice, to those of the Old Testament: 'If the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the

flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God!' The apostle shews afterward, in the same chapter, that, by this sacrifice, he becomes the 'Mediator of the new testament,' or covenant, ver. 15, which is ratified in his blood, as the old testament, or covenant, was by the 'blood of calves and goats,' ver. 19, pursuant to the universal custom of confirming covenants with sacrifices. Having enlarged on this comparison, he says, ver. 26. 28, 'Now, in the end of the world, hath he [Christ] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, being once offered to bear the sins of many,' that he might mediate a covenant for those whom he had thus purchased. It is in the same sense, and for the same reason, that our Saviour, delivering the cup in his last supper, Matt. xxvi. 28, says, 'This is my blood of the new testament,' or covenant; on which words it ought carefully to be remarked, that they are the same with those of the Septuagint, Exod. xxiv. 8, where the covenant by Moses is concluded and ratified between God and the Israelites, and where we find the people sprinkled with the blood of these sacrifices that had been offered up to God, as they are, in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, with the blood of the great and true sacrifice offered by the Son of God to his Father. Thus God and the communicating Christian confirm the new covenant by a mutual participation of the sacrifice on which it is founded; the Christian taking it as the very covenant itself, and God accepting it as the atonement for sins past, and the faithful pledge of obedience for the time to come. St. Luke, chap. xxii. 20, and St. Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 25, deliver these words of our Saviour in somewhat a different manner, but to the same effect; namely, 'This is the new testament,' or covenant, 'in my blood.' The latter of these apostles sufficiently explains the meaning of these words, Heb. ix. 14—17, and shews both how remission of sins is obtained through the blood and death of Christ; and how the covenant, procured by the mediation founded on his blood, comes to be called a testament, or will.

If our blessed Saviour, then, hath by dying, satisfied the justice of his Father for our sins, and, by his mediation, sued

out the pardon of these sins, we must thankfully receive these inestimable benefits on such terms as he hath pleased to annex; and ought to consider every thing he hath enjoined us in the New Testament, not only as consistent with, but as actually comprised in, the testamentary covenant or dispensation delivered to us by his gospel.

Now there is nothing more evident, than that he requires faith, and reformation of manners, in all who receive his covenant; and, to perfect both, requires also, that they should terminate in charity, or the love of God and man.

That faith on our part is a necessary condition of the covenant, we must have concluded, had the Scriptures been silent on the subject; because without it we could not possibly receive Christ either as a teacher, or a Redeemer. But there is nothing the Scriptures express more strongly. St. Paul says, Gal. iii. 26, 27, 'Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ,' that is, as have been admitted into the covenant, 'have put on Christ.' And our Saviour himself saith, John iii. 36, 'He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not on the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.' He also saith, Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth, and is baptized,' or admitted into the covenant, 'shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.'

That reformation of manners, or obedience to the will of God, is a necessary condition of the covenant in all who receive it, is evident also both from the nature of the thing, and from Scripture. It is evident from the nature of the thing, because the obstinately wicked cannot possibly be united to God, nor made happy; for it is against the nature of an infinitely just and good Being to tempt his creatures to sin; which he must do, did he bestow happiness, that is, the enjoyment of himself, on the wicked as well as the good. And this is likewise made evident from the holy Scriptures; for therein 'all men every where are commanded to repent,' Acts xviii. 30; and 'to do good,' that is, 'to bring forth fruit meet for repentance,' Matt. iii. 8. Hence it is that the baptism of John is called 'the baptism of repentance,' Mark i. 4, and that St. Peter says to the dis-

ciples, 'Repent, and be baptized,' or received into the covenant, 'every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins,' Acts ii. 38.

And lastly, That the faith, repentance, and obedience, of all who covenant with God in Christ Jesus, should terminate in the love of God and man, is manifest both from reason and revelation. Reason tells us, that, although God is to be feared both for his justice and power, yet that our duty to him, when improved by repeated meditations on his excellence, and grateful recollections of his goodness, ought to end in an ardent and lasting love of a Being so infinitely glorious in himself, and so full of compassion towards us. It also tells us, we ought to love those who are joined to us by one common nature, especially when to the ties of humanity those by which we are united to one another, and to God, are added. Revelation tells us the same thing. When the Pharisee asked our Saviour this question, 'Which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said unto him, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets,' Matt. xxii. 35—37. 39, 40. Well, therefore, might St. Paul say, that 'love is the fulfilling of the law,' Rom. xiii. 10. and that charity is greater than faith and hope,' 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

I might have taken a much greater compass both in the reasoning, and textuary proof of the conditions on which salvation is offered us through the blood of our Redeemer Christ Jesus; but I have said enough to hearers who may, if they please, consider the subject more at large, and who, by the assistance of God's word, can easily see and judge for themselves.

However, while I am thus proving, that the conditional tender of salvation through the blood of Christ, instead of encouraging us to sin, calls us to newness and holiness of life; I foresee it will be objected, that, if this be the case, our covenant founded in that blood is but a covenant of works, after all; from whence it will follow, that we gain nothing by the death of Christ. Now this objection acquires a still greater degree of strength, when it is considered, that higher

purity and holiness are expected of Christians than of other men, even on account of the covenant, and of the sacrifice that procured it. 'God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness,' 1 Thess. iv. 7. We are obliged henceforth 'to walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But we have not so learned Christ.'—No; 'We must put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and must be renewed in the spirit of our mind; that we may put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness,' Eph. iv. 17—20. 22—24. 'It is now high time to awake out of sleep. —The night is far spent, the day is at hand; we must therefore cast off the works of darkness, we must put on the armour of light; we must walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; for we have put on the Lord Jesus Christ,' Rom. xiii. 11—14. 'Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, we must arm ourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God,' 1 Pet. iv. 1, 2. How is the blood of Christ, 'who offered himself without spot to God,' to cleanse us? Is it not by 'purifying our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?' Heb. ix. 14.

I answer, It certainly is; and surely, if it produces this effect, we have therein an immense advantage. If, in the death of Christ, we see more clearly than ever the abominable heinousness and danger of sin, we must, from his cross, hear the loudest call to repentance. If, by his blood, he hath obtained the pardon of all our past sins duly repented of, we have undoubtedly, in that pardon, the most comfortable encouragement to newness of life. We are no longer tempted, as the men of Judah were in the days of Jeremiah, to say, 'There is no hope, and therefore we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the

imagination of his evil heart,' Jer. xviii. 12. It is not so with those who are made the sons of God by Christ Jesus. They know, that 'when he shall appear, they shall be like him. Every man, therefore, that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as he is pure,' 1 John iii. 2, 3. 'For we are saved by hope,' Rom. viii. 24.

Besides, is it not an immense advantage, that we, who were 'by nature the children of wrath, even as others,' Eph. ii. 3, 'have power now given us to become the sons of God,' John i. 12. that we, 'who were sometime alienated, and enemies in our mind, by wicked works, yet now hath Christ reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to present us holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable, in the sight of God?' Col. i. 21, 22. While God considered us as enemies, all we did was displeasing to him, not excepting our best actions, which were done without any regard to his will or service. But now that Christ hath 'made peace for us through the blood of his cross;' Col. i. 20. 'and hath redeemed us that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;' Gal. iv. 5. 'God dealeth with us as with sons,' Heb. xii. 7. 'and, because we are sons, hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,' Gal. iv. 6. If, then, this Holy Spirit lovingly 'chasteneth us' at one time, Heb. xii. 6. and bestoweth 'his fruit of love, joy, peace,' upon us at another, Gal. v. 22. if he also 'helpeth our infirmities,' Rom. viii. 26. if it is by him 'that we have faith,' 1 Cor. xii. 9. that 'our souls are purified in obeying the truth,' 1 Pet. i. 22. that 'we are sanctified,' 1 Cor. vi. 11. that we have 'power, and love, and a sound mind,' 2 Tim. i. 7. how can we look upon ourselves as hardly dealt with by the covenant, for requiring reformation and good works of us, since, at the same time that we are commanded to use our utmost endeavours to 'work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,' we are also assured, that 'it is God which worketh in us both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure?' Phil. ii. 12, 13.

When we consider the powerful instruments made use of by the Holy Spirit to keep us within the terms of the covenant, we shall be the more clearly convinced, that infinite wisdom, as well as mercy, is employed in the scheme of our salvation; and shall blame ourselves alone, if we are

not happy. All the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testament were wrought to satisfy us, that the Scriptures are the word of God. Being satisfied of this, we then hear God speaking to us the words of eternal wisdom, and enforcing his injunctions, not only with the most affecting examples, with temporal blessings and judgments, but with sanctions of infinite weight. And, that our attention may be perpetually awakened, and fixed on these things, he hath solemnly sanctified a seventh part of our time, which is to be spent in learning our duty, in searching the Scriptures, in examining ourselves, and in meditating on all the proofs and motives wherewith the faith and practice of a Christian are enforced. He hath also instituted a ministry to assist us in every part of this important work; and given us a covenant, contained in two solemn ordinances, which, by an awful promise, or vow, binds the whole of his religion on our consciences. Now the Holy Spirit, who is the fountain both of faith and good works, communicates to us the necessary portions of grace, through the word, through the sabbath, through the ministry, and through the covenant of God, which we enter into by the one sacrament, and continually renew by the other.

Such means can hardly fail of success in any man who diligently applies them. But, forasmuch as 'there is no man who liveth, and sinneth not,' the door of mercy is still open, provided we repent, and do our best to amend what is amiss in our behaviour; for we are the children of God, who knows we are but dust, and looks upon us, through the merits of Christ our head, with all the patience and pity of a compassionate father, who willeth not the death of any sinner, much less of that poor sinner whom he hath adopted for his own child.

Let us not therefore say our case under covenant is hard, because it ties us to faith, and reformation of manners; for Christ saith, 'My grace is sufficient for you. Come, therefore, unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' "Provided you do but feel the weight of your own sins, and apply to me for relief, I will lighten you of that load; and, in lieu of it, will lay on you a 'yoke that is easy, and a burden that is light;' namely, the covenant purchased with my blood, which, both on ac-

count of the peace it brings with it, and the assistance I will give you in keeping it, you will find to be not only easy, but delightful." Neither let us say we believe in the merits of Christ, who hath already suffered the punishment of our sins, and therefore we may persevere in sin, forasmuch as God will not punish it over again in us; for Christ will say, 'I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity. Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil, and his angels.' And St. James saith, 'What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? Know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead. Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?'

We are not to run into extremes, nor to wrest one part of the Scripture to a sense opposed by another. He understands not the word of God, who thinks we must give up this passage of St. James; or others of St. Paul, where the chief stress is laid on faith. 'To him that worketh,' saith the latter, Rom. iv. 4, 5, 'is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.' And, in the foregoing chapter, at the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth verse, he saith, 'Where is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law.'

To shew the perfect consonancy of the Spirit speaking by these two writers, nothing more will be needful, than to observe, first, That the faith which St. James tells us is not sufficient alone to justify us, is an historical, unfruitful faith; whereas that which St. Paul says justifieth without the deeds of the law, is a lively operative faith; for none of the scriptural writers lay greater stress on the necessity of repentance and holiness, than he. Secondly, That the works recommended by St. James, are works done in consequence of a lively and operative faith; whereas those condemned by St. Paul, are works done before, or without faith. Thirdly, That St. James does by no means exclude the necessity of faith; nor St. Paul, of works done in consequence of faith;

the one only making faith in the blood of Christ the necessary immediate instrument of our salvation; and the other requiring, that this faith shall not be deemed efficacious, till it hath proved itself a true and lively faith by its fruits. St. James, therefore, is not to be understood as contradicting or correcting St. Paul; but as correcting the erroneous readers of St. Paul, who, misinterpreting his words, expected salvation from a faith in Christ which had no effect on their morals. The substance of both their doctrines, laid together, is this: he who believes in the sacrifice made by the death of Christ for the sins of the world, hath a right to the covenant of peace with God, through the righteousness of Christ applied to him by faith, and not through his own righteousness; which could not, exclusive of that faith, have entitled him to the benefit of that covenant; but however, he is not to expect salvation through that faith alone, if it should prove dead, inactive, or unfruitful, because repentance, and reformation of manners, is, by the whole tenor of the Scriptures, made a necessary condition of the covenant. 'Christ came into the world to save sinners;' but how? By calling them to faith and repentance; and, under these circumstances, by imputing the merits of his own sinless obedience to them, and satisfying the justice of his Father for them. Thus we see ourselves obliged to do what we can, and Christ's merits and blood laid down to pay for the rest. But what is it we can do? We can honour and please God by a life and conversation conformable to his will, and the example of his Son, whereof nothing but his grace, and, the effect of that grace, a lively faith in us, can be either the rule or motive; but, by such a life, we can in no sort atone for our past and present sins, nor entitle ourselves to the glories of heaven. But this Christ hath done for us, having 'bought us, who were sold under sin,' with such a price as we never can repay, much less overpay; and therefore, 'when we have done all we can, we must say, We are unprofitable servants;' for that servant only is profitable, who brings in some gain to his master, over and above the price that was paid for him.

But, since St. Paul exhorts us to stand fast in the faith, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. and St. Peter, in the first chapter of his Second Epistle, to give diligence to make our calling and

election sure, by adding virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity, to faith; we are to conclude, that these things are in some measure placed within our own power; and ought to resolve on a strict obedience to the voice of God, thus speaking to us by his apostles.

Give me leave now to conclude with reminding you, that the death of Christ is a fact acknowledged by all; that it is set forth in the strongest scriptural terms, as a true and an effectual sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; and that we must either firmly believe in it as such, or give the lie to God, and undertake to answer ourselves for all we do. Let him that needeth no physician, rely on his own health and strength; but let us, who are sick, and sensible also of our sickness, repose our trust in the prescriptions offered us by the great Healer of souls, who directs us to his blood as a precious balsam for the conscious wounds of guilt; and to repentance, as a regimen preservative of our future innocence. Let us apply both by a lively faith to ourselves. Let us also entertain that sense of gratitude which is due to the inconceivable goodness of our Redeemer, 'who, while we were yet sinners, died for us;' who, great as he is in himself, and glorious on his throne in heaven, 'took on him the form of a servant, and humbled himself to the death of the cross, despising the shame,' that he might save us his poor offending creatures from the eternal punishment of our sins, and exalt us to the endless joys of heaven. If we are not wholly lost to all goodness, our faith must excite in us this grateful sense of his compassion for us; and this sense, to a mind capable of entertaining it in proportion as it does the sense of infinitely less considerable favours, will be a more powerful motive to a good life, than even the expectation of eternal retribution. Such a mind must have a deep abhorrence of, and a settled indignation at, sin; because it betrays the infinite Benefactor anew; it puts him to open shame again; it crucifies him afresh, in his spiritual body. And to such a mind, nothing—less than the possession of heaven itself, can give a pleasure so lasting, or a joy so exalted, as acts of virtue, which in our case, are all acts of gratitude, whereby the infinitely gracious Being is pleased and honoured.

'Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for he is faithful that promised); and let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works;' Heb. x. 19, 20. 23, 24.

And now let us humbly beseech the Holy Spirit to quicken our hearts with this faith; let us earnestly beseech our gracious Saviour powerfully to intercede for us, and all other believers; and, finally, let us humbly beseech the Father of mercies to accept of us, through the effectual merit and mediation of our Redeemer; to whom, in the unity of the ever-blessed Trinity, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE XI.

THE SANCTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN LAW.

MATTHEW XXV. 46.

These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.

THE Christian religion is every where represented to us in Scripture, as a covenant between God and each particular Christian. The promise of God, who will never deceive us, is sufficient to assure us of the performance on his part. But as we were by the fallibility of our original nature capable of non-performance on our part; and as we are, under the present corruption of that nature, strongly disposed to falsify our promises to him; so it is necessary, in order to a firm perseverance in our engagements, that we should have somewhat of much greater strength to bind us, than the mere abstracted virtue of a promise. What, or how great, this should be, he can best conjecture, who best knows the

depravity of his own nature, and the violence of the temptations to which he is exposed. Such a one will not take the covenant upon him, if he does not expect the greatest advantages from keeping it, unless the disadvantages arising from a total refusal of it should, in his judgment, be nearly equal to those he might apprehend from a failure on his side, in case he should enter into it. But as all men are 'by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath,' a covenant of peace with God, on any terms must be highly eligible to every man, provided that peace is to be followed by an ability bestowed on the new Christian to keep his part of the covenant, and by the greatest happiness his nature is capable of receiving, expressly engaged to him by the promise of God, on his duly observing the articles he stipulates for. This will continue true, although he should be by the same covenant threatened with an equal degree of misery on non-performance; first, because he hath no reason to expect exemption from that misery, in case he should not covenant at all; that is, in case he should still remain in his original state of enmity with God; and secondly, because, be the misery ever so great, as he hath it in his power to avoid it, he can have no reasonable objection to the covenant on that account, while he considers himself as a rational creature, whose lowest character it is, to choose good rather than evil, the greatest good rather than the greatest evil.

This is a true account of the Christian covenant, so far as the justice and goodness of God, and the happiness of men, can be considered as affected by it. It proposes infinite happiness, to which we have previously no right. It threatens eternal misery, to which we were liable however. It does both, to beings who have sense enough to prefer the pleasure they find in the smell of a rose, to the pain they feel in the prick of a pin. Whatsoever the weakness of man may really be, the self-sufficient, who thinks his reason a wise enough guide, who loves virtue for its own abstracted beauty, who hates vice for its own abstracted deformity, and who therefore insists he needs nothing but his own nature to make him live a life acceptable to God, hath not the shadow of a pretence for declining this covenant. The observation of its articles will not put him a hair's breadth out of his own way; and, if its motives are not necessary to

him, they will not, however, lessen the force of those he borrows from the excellence of his nature. As to us, who confess ourselves corrupt and ill-disposed by nature, we stand in need of strong hopes and fears to keep us in our duty; and therefore have reason, as often as we fall into temptation, to look on the eternal sanctions of our covenant as necessary and happy preservatives of our virtue. Sure I am, we never find them too cogent. Nay, were it not for the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, which he always lends to such as covenant with him, and do their best to stand fast in that covenant, great and powerful as its sanctions are, so miserably are we enslaved, through the corruption of our nature, to sin, that we should never be able to perform the conditions requisite on our part.

The happy self-sufficient may, on this confession, treat us with contempt, as creatures of very bad dispositions, or of such meanness and folly, as to confess a weakness we are perhaps no more addicted to than others; they may call us mercenary wretches, and wholly destitute of virtue, because we do good through hope of reward, and abstain from evil through dread of punishment; but they must own we are humble; especially when they hear we lay claim to no other merit, than that of humility, and a just sense of our own infirmities. It is true, we hope this diffidence of ourselves may make us watchful, and careful to apply for greater strength than our own; may preserve in us a lively attention to the sanctions of our covenant, as necessary to creatures so full of frailty; we hope these helps may keep us in our duty, till that duty becomes agreeable to us on its own account; but infinitely more because it is most pleasing in his sight, to whom we owe our being, and all the good annexed to that being. We think the scheme of improvement, chalked out by the Christian covenant, bids fairer for this effect in us than any other; which if, with the blessing of God, it should at length produce, we shall then have no great reason to envy others, who could begin a course of virtue without, as they tell us, the least regard to their own happiness.

But should these men ask us how we came to think so very meanly of ourselves, since we were cast in the same mould with them, and had originally an equal chance for excellence of nature; we shall readily own, it was experi-

ence and Scripture that taught us this lesson of humility, and convinced us we could not be reformed without hopes and fears in futurity. We found so great a weakness in our judgment, that we often took a thing for good, merely because it was pleasant; and a thing for evil, merely because it was disagreeable; which we afterward found, to our cost, the very reverse. We also found, that when we judged best of things, it was often impossible to bring our affections and passions so to second our judgment, as to procure it the direction of our wills. Whether we ever saw the beauty of virtue with such enamoured eyes, or the ugliness of vice with so deep a distaste, as the men we are speaking to did, we cannot tell: taking them by their professions, we believe we did not; for we often found vice pleasant, and virtue disagreeable: but if we are to judge by their actions, compared with our own, we cannot see reason to think there was originally any great difference between them and us. Of the difference, as it stands at present, there is but one who hath a right to judge. Having long smarted under the rod of experience, which, they say, is the tutoress of fools, we at length recovered sense enough to find out our own defects; which put us on applying to God for assistance.

But we no sooner opened his word with this view, than we saw, what our own experience had told us, that we are 'conceived and born in sin;' that 'the thoughts of our hearts are only evil continually;' that our 'hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;' and that we 'are unable of ourselves, to help ourselves' to better dispositions. We there saw this corruption of our nature accounted for, and a method of cure provided for it in the Christian covenant, which, laying hold of our affections and passions, those instruments of sin, in our present natural state of depravity, hath converted them into so many engines of reformation, by proposing the eternal joys of heaven, as a proper object of the first; and the endless miseries of hell, as a bridle to the last. The more these joys engaged our desires, and the more these terrors alarmed our fears, the less sensibly did we feel the force of temptation. Hence it was, that, although the effect of our fears, was very

shocking, we did not wish it less; because we found, the more agreeable impressions made on our desires would not have been sufficient without it. We were so depraved and stupefied in sin, so thoroughly convinced of our own inability to subdue it in ourselves, and so much afraid of feeling its dreadful effects in our state of separation from, and enmity with God, that we were glad of peace and reformation on any terms; and therefore closed with the covenant, as well satisfied with its dreadful threatenings, which we saw necessary, as with its sweetest promises, which our corrupt nature forbade us to hope for, without a due attention to those threatenings. Bad as we still are, we are sensible we should have been much worse, had we wanted either the happiness of futurity, as an incitement to good, or the terrors of eternity, as a dissuasive from bad actions.

Thus you have our confession honestly laid before you. Do not despise us altogether for the judgment we have made of the covenant and ourselves; you, I mean, who own the Scriptures, and yet look on our motives as mercenary and slavish; till you have better considered, that those 'Scriptures have concluded all,' not excepting even you, 'under sin,' Gal. iii. 22; that they tell you, 'The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God;' but found reason to say, 'They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doth good, no, not one,' Psal. xiv. 2, 3; and that, in order to reclaim mankind, he hath promised us, on the dissolution of this earthly tabernacle, 'a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,' 2 Cor. v. 1; and threatened in case of disobedience, 'to cast us into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched,' Mark ix. 45. There is no honorary exception for you here. You may, in as high terms as you please, declare your disinterested love of virtue, and tell us you disdain to pursue it for the sake of heaven; but you see the all-knowing God hath 'concluded you under sin,' as well as us; hath pronounced your 'hearts deceitful and desperately wicked,' as well as ours; perhaps not the less deceitful and wicked, for your high opinion of them; and hath proposed the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell, as the

means of reformation, even to you, with all your beauty of virtue, and deformity of vice. This I know must be very mortifying to men, who set up for such refinements in morality, as not only to object to God's threatenings against sin, but even to despise the promises he makes to righteousness, as unworthy of their attention. There must be an error somewhere here. Either your Maker is mistaken in offering you such motives, as you ought to disdain; or you must be mistaken in thinking you have no need of them. You are but men, and may possibly err. Pride is a most insinuating flatterer. If ever there is reason to suspect its influence, it is when men think highly of themselves, in opposition to the peremptory judgment pronounced on them by the Searcher of hearts; or when they treat with contempt such methods of reformation, as cost the blood of his only-begotten Son to purchase for them. Let me advise you, in the bowels of charity, to examine yourselves more closely on this subject; for, if you cannot return to an humbler way of thinking concerning yourselves, you must inevitably fall into a total apostacy from the word and covenant of God, which set forth sentiments of you directly contrary to your own.

Try yourself by facts. Can you resist the allurements of a wanton beauty, merely because virtue is more beautiful? Or does the deformity of fornication or adultery, to which she invites you, give her face the aspect of a fiend in your eyes; however, this perhaps may be no fair trial of your principle. Try yourself in a case of less difficulty. Fraud or imposition is naturally a filthy, a despicable vice. Are you sure you never attempted the property of another by undue arts in trade, gaming, horse-racing, or the like? I ask this the rather, because the low pitiful vice under consideration often disguises itself in lace and jewels, at which time it hath so much the air of a gentleman, that possibly it might pass, on your principle, as a thing not altogether contemptible. I know few vices that make a more abominable figure than drunkenness, or to which a rational creature can have less temptation; yet it may be, for all that, you have been sometimes drunk. If you ever were, where was your passion then for the beauty of virtue, and your aversion to the foulness of vice? Or rather, where were they, when you,

yet sober, yielded to the other bottle, or schemed the very carousal itself? Is pride no vice? Or, have you always so abhorred it for its deformity, as never once to have thought too meanly of another, nor too highly of yourself, I mean particularly in point of understanding? Are you sure you never preferred your own opinion on a weak reason, purely because it was your own, to that of another man, founded on a stronger, merely because it was not yours? Have you never attempted, in dispute, or otherwise, to make even the Scriptures ply a little to your preconception? Or, how often have you resigned your judgment to the dictates of the divine oracles? Try yourself on the point at present under debate. You believe God requires, we should be virtuous. You believe also, there can be no virtue in doing good for the sake of reward; or in abstaining from bad actions for fear of punishment. Yet you know God hath in his word promised infinite rewards to the first, and threatened endless punishments to the last. You know there is nothing he inculcates oftener, nor in stronger terms, throughout his word. How can you, on your principle, clear him of an intention to destroy all virtue? Was it for nothing that he thought fit to bear so strongly on our hopes and fears? Did he intend we should altogether neglect what he so emphatically urges on the reader? If, on this trial, you still continue to cherish your own opinion, I must tell you, there is one virtue you think very ugly, and that is, the love of truth; and one vice you think very beautiful, and that is, the conceit you have of your own judgment, which, in this instance, is the judgment of an egregious fool; because it judges the Scriptures to be the word of God, who cannot err; and yet holds to its own opinion as right, directly in opposition to the Scriptures.

But here you will retort, that we Christians, with all the force of our sanctions, can no more stand this examination than you. If this is true, you cannot say, the sanctions of our covenant deprive us of our freedom, or make us so slavishly regular in our lives, as you foreboded. But our vices do not render you virtuous. You say your sanctions are sufficient. That this is mere speculation, the trial recommended to you clearly proves; for, in fact, you find your love of virtue for its own sake, cannot make you virtuous; nor your hatred

of vice, on its own account, hinder you from being vicious. This being the real case, you have as much reason as we to look out for stronger inducements to a good life. We recommend ours as the best, not only because they are the strongest (and yet proved not too strong by the truth of your own retort), but because they are the choice of him who made you, who best knows what you want, who is too wise to err in the choice of means, and too good not to accept of your services on terms of his own proposing. If you are as virtuous as he desires you should be, and on the footing he requires, what else, or what more, can you wish for? But if, through a conceited supposition of your own excellence, and a chimerical attempt to be virtuous, on principles of your own contrivance, which have little or no force, you aim at an unaccountable and unattainable virtue, and fall short of the reality, while you catch at the shadow, will you not have reason in the end, to curse your own vanity and folly? What is the virtue and goodness of an accountable creature? Is it any thing else than duty, than the performance of that duty we owe to the Governor of the world, whom we ought infinitely to revere, because he is just, and will punish, if we sin; whom we ought infinitely to love, because he is the most excellent and beneficent of all beings, and will if we obey, reward us beyond our merits? If you fear and love him, as reason requires you should, you will, to the uttermost of your power, discharge your duty to him; that is, you will be virtuous, you will be good, you will be what he intended you should be when he gave you being. If virtue is any thing distinct from God, will he be better pleased with your regulating your actions in regard to that, than in regard to his own majesty and goodness? Take care you do not excite his jealousy by a preference of your own ideal virtue to his real prerogative, by setting up an idol of your own making in your heart, to intercept that duty and devotion, whereof he only ought to be the object. You cannot be guilty either of a greater absurdity, or a greater crime, than a resolution to be accountable to yourself only. You do not depend more on God as a physical being, than as a moral agent. He is the Governor, as well as the Creator, of the world. As your Creator, he knows what you are, infinitely better than you do yourself; and as your Governor, he

chooses to rule over you, according to his attributes, and the nature he hath given you. Judge therefore of your own nature by his commands, rather than by the airy whims of your own brain. If he tells you, 'the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment,' you must believe it to be true, that they actually will; just that they should; and most fit for you, whose affections are so corrupt, and passions so disorderly, to be seriously and awfully laid to heart. If he tells you, 'the righteous shall go into life eternal,' this also you must believe to be true, consistent with the justice and goodness of God, and perfectly suitable to your nature, that cannot be reduced to its duty without an expectation so highly interesting. If you candidly consult your own experience, you will find this to be the very best method of proceeding with you.

Put the case then, that you have found out God will not be really so bountiful as he promises to the good, nor so very severe as he threatens to the wicked, it will be but prudence in you to conceal your discovery, and to content yourself with living as you list, on the strength of it; for, should you publish it, you will lose the benefit of the secret. Your neighbours will be as wise as you, and will begin to practise those arts of living, those outrages, perhaps on yourself, which the discovery will encourage them to, and which you might have enjoyed the use of alone, while they, poor simpletons! had they still believed in heaven and hell, being tied up by their faith, must have left you, who are loose, a wider field to range in, and have fallen themselves an easy prey to the designs of a man unawed by expectations so apt to hamper the believer. It will be a silly vanity in you to preach up a doctrine you might otherwise have turned to so good account.

However, to be a little more serious; if the belief of future retributions, in the full extent, is really so necessary to the good government of the world, can that belief be an error? Is God able to manage a world of his own making no otherwise than by idle fears, and groundless hopes? Or, is the world able to govern itself without him, or his expedients? Or, will mankind be happier, if they shake off all government, and live at random? No; such suppositions would do too much violence to common sense; and there-

fore we must have recourse to the doctrine of my text, as the great fundamental of all morality, of all society, of all government.

On looking carefully into our own nature, and considering that we are made by a Being of infinite wisdom, goodness, justice, and power, we find it probable, that our souls are intended for immortality. The capacities of the soul are greater than its present occasions require. The vessel is too large for what we have here to put into it. Its thirst of knowledge, and appetite of grandeur, appear unbounded; at least, there is nothing attainable in this world that can satisfy them. Considered in this light, it assumes the air of somewhat above its present condition; and seems, on many occasions, like a prince in disguise, to move and act with a port superior to the dress it outwardly appears in. If we add to this its eager desire of immortality, and abhorrence of annihilation, and then ask, Why such capacities? why such desires? we shall find reason to conclude, either that they are unnatural, which cannot possibly be true of the capacities, nor probably of the desires, because proportionate to the capacities; or that they were given us by our Maker for purposes more adequate to their size, than we can discover, in a state of greater importance. This must appear still more probable, when we reflect, that, just as the Governor of the world is, he does not always reward or punish, in this life, the actions of us his subjects; nay, that he never rewards here in proportion to the ideas we have of his goodness, nor punishes in proportion to those we have of his justice. From hence it is but natural to conclude, he will do both hereafter. But whether our future existence will be endless, is another question, and of more difficult solution. However, as there is some reason to believe it will, and none to believe it will not, we cannot help concluding in favour of the former. We grant God can, and may annihilate our souls, if he pleases; but it appears probable he will not; for to what end? May they not be turned to good account in the creation? May not his justice, his wisdom, his goodness and power, be glorified in their existence to all eternity? To some it seems rational to believe, that, now they are in being, it will as absolutely require an act of omnipotence to annihilate, as it did to create them.

If it will, what reason is there for supposing omnipotence thus exerted in contrary effects, in the destruction of its own works? Such a supposition seems to arraign the wisdom of the first cause; and would, one should think, reflect more strongly on him who foresaw all things, than on a less knowing workman, who destroys what he makes, when it wears old, and becomes useless.

But all these things are matter only of probable conjecture, which, without revelation, we should never have been able to build on with any certainty. That indeed hath confirmed these conjectures, and 'brought life and immortality to light,' which were before covered with such a degree of darkness, as rendered them scarcely discernible. It is, however, observable, that the immortality of the soul is no otherwise discovered in Scripture than by the eternity of the rewards or punishments, to which it is to be adjudged; so that we can draw no argument from thence for our existence, beyond the duration of our happiness or misery. In speculation, the belief of immortality precedes the belief of retribution; but in revelation, which is practical, not speculative, the eternity of the retribution is all that is inculcated; and we are left to infer from thence, by a necessary consequence, the immortality. The truth is, happiness is always represented in Scripture as the same thing with life, and misery as the same thing with death or destruction; which opens a much nobler field for reflection than hath been commonly imagined. It intimates to us, that the soul, once called into being, can be truly said to live and exist, only in its piety, virtue, and happiness; that is, in its union with God; and that it admits of no other death but sin, and separation from the source of all good. Its endless happiness results necessarily from its goodness, and its love; and why should God ever destroy that which is good, that which loves him? And its endless misery results as necessarily and naturally from its wickedness and aversation from God; and why should he reduce that to nothing, which he did not make merely that it might be wicked for some time, and then ceasing to be, should wholly disappoint the wise ends he had in creating?

The punishment of the wicked is said in my text to be everlasting, and the reward of the righteous eternal.

Everlasting, and eternal, signify the same thing in our language, and are put for one and the same word in the Greek original: wherefore in that passage of Scripture they are to be taken as precisely importing the same thing; because it cannot be supposed, that any writer, much less that Christ, could have two very different senses to the same word, repeated in the same short sentence, without giving the least warning of his change of meaning, or adding any mark of limitation to it in either place of that sentence. We are then to look for but one interpretation of the word in this place, when applied both to the reward and punishment.

But here it is to be noted, that the word is sometimes applied to things that had both a beginning, and an end, as well as to such things as had a beginning, but shall never have an end; or that being, that is without beginning and end. It must, therefore, be determined by Scripture, and the reason of the thing, what extent of duration is to be understood by it here.

The happiness and misery of our future state have their duration expressed to us, Daniel xii. 2. by the same term our Saviour uses; 'Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame, and everlasting contempt.' For the reason already given, the word applied to both must signify the same thing; and that this is the same as eternal, appears from ver. 3. where we are told, 'They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.' That in the original Hebrew, which is translated by 'for ever and ever,' expresses endless duration so strongly, that all the ancient translations render it by the words which, in their several languages, best intimate eternity, or duration absolutely without end. Our future happiness is called, Luke xii. 33, 'a treasure in the heavens that faileth not,' and 1 Pet. i. 4, 'an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens.' By these expressions, and many more that might be brought for the same purpose, we may see the sense of eternal applied in my text to the joys of the righteous after this life; which may serve to give us the sense of it likewise when applied to the torments of the damned.

But those torments also are expressed in other places by terms that set forth an endless duration. Our Saviour represents them, Mark ix. 43, by 'an inextinguishable fire;' and thrice over in the same chapter by 'a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched.' But why an immortal worm, and an inextinguishable fire, so often reiterated, and so alarmingly inculcated, if the thing to be tormented were, after some time, to be delivered from them? To tell us we should suffer by two eternal instruments of vengeance, and to mean only, that we should suffer under them for an age, a year, or a day, would be nonsense, or a wretched shuffle of words, calculated merely to frighten us. Why should the worm be called 'immortal,' and the fire 'inextinguishable,' if we were no way concerned in either of the epithets? But the eternity of hell-torments is still more directly expressed, Rev. xiv. 11, where, in relation to such as had 'received the mark of the beast,' the words intimating the endless duration are applied to the very torments, 'the smoke of their torments ascendeth up for ever and ever.' 'He,' saith St. James, ch. ii. 13, 'shall have judgment without mercy, that shewed no mercy.' Here is a particular instance, wherein a criminal is assured of punishment without end; for, if it were to have an end, it could, with no regard to truth, be said to be without mercy.

Since the eternity of future rewards and punishments is thus exhibited in terms admitting no limitation, we must take those that do, in the same unlimited sense, especially as they are the very terms appropriated to the eternity of God himself, and in so great a variety of places applied to the happiness and misery to come, that we cannot rationally believe the inspired writers could have used them to express a certain portion of time only. Surely, if they had, they must, in some one place among so many, have hinted that intention, which they never do.

As to the rewards to be conferred on the obedient and the good, they are every where represented as endless and everlasting. 'I know,' saith Christ, speaking of his Father, John xii. 50, 'that his commandment is life everlasting;' that is, that he who keepeth it shall live for ever. St. Paul, Rom. vi. 22, thus comforts the penitent converts to Christianity, 'Now being made free from sin, and become the ser-

vants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.' Thus also he encourages such as are in trouble, 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,' 2 Cor. iv. 17. 'I give unto my sheep eternal life,' saith Christ, John x. 28. Passages to this purpose so abound in all parts of the New Testament, that, unless we think the Holy Spirit intended to deceive us, we must believe the blessed reward of a good life here will be life, and joy, and glory, without end hereafter.

And are not the punishments of the wicked said to be eternal, as frequently, and in terms as express? Are they not called 'everlasting burnings?' Isa. xxxiii. 14, 'everlasting shame and contempt?' Dan. xii. 2, 'everlasting fire?' Matt. xviii. 8. 'everlasting punishment?' Matt. xxv. 46. 'eternal judgment?' Heb. vi. 2. 'eternal damnation?' Mark iii. 29. 'the blackness of darkness for ever?' Jude 13. Were these expressions thrown out only to frighten us into our duty with false terrors? Doth God, who forbids us 'to do evil that good may come of it,' use equivocal words, and pious frauds, in order to make us honest men, and lovers of truth? No; but these epithets of everlasting and eternal, although applied here to that which may last for ever, must signify only a limited time; because they are so to be understood, when applied to things that of necessity must have an end. Is this a consequence? I may venture to say it can only be such to a very bad head, governed by a worse heart, that cherishes in itself the hope of a temporary punishment, in order that it may sin with less restraint or fear.

Who expects eternal happiness on any other footing than God's promise? And hath he not the menaces of God to fill him with the dread of eternal punishment, couched in the same terms, as to its duration? Is the God of truth less to be believed when he threatens us with what we deserve, than when he promises what we neither do, nor ever can, deserve? No; but God is just, say the objectors to this doctrine, and therefore will not punish a temporary offence with eternal misery. But I say God is just in having set eternal happiness and misery before free and rational beings, and left them to choose which they will. If they choose the latter, who is it makes them eternally miserable? Not

God surely, 'who willeth not the death of a sinner;' but themselves, who, for the pleasure of sin, trample on all his goodness, violate all his laws, proclaim open war with him, associate with the devil, and so debase and pollute their own nature, as to render it for ever incapable of glory and happiness. That such men are very unfit to prescribe their own punishment, is plain; because they say, vice sufficiently punishes itself here, and have found a way to make their vices sit so easy on them, that, were they to submit to a future suffering of any sort, we may be sure it would be a very gentle one, and of a mere momentary continuance. He who chooses hell, rather than heaven, for any consideration in this world, as the difference is doubly infinite, sins infinitely against his own reason. And he who wilfully insults God with his vices, sins infinitely; because he sins against infinite Majesty. All indignities rise in proportion to the known grandeur of him, to whom they are offered, and in strict justice ought to be punished in the same proportion; if offered to our earthly father, they are an unnatural breach of filial duty, and are punishable with the forfeiture of his favour; if offered to our king, they are rebellion and high-treason, and are punishable with the loss of honour, fortune, and life; if offered to God, they are blasphemy and impiety, and punishable, as they are committed against the infinite Being, with endless disgrace and misery. This gradation cannot be denied without levelling God and all his creatures, and confounding all distinctions. Wherefore sins of indignity are to be rated and punished according to the known dignity of the being offended, and the littleness or insignificance of him who commits them rather aggravates than lessens their guilt, the offence being always esteemed so much the more provoking, as the offender is more inferior to the party offended. Besides, there is another consideration whereby the heinousness of sin is to be esteemed; and that is the importance of the law, and the ends of the government, against which they are perpetrated. Now the importance of the law we transgress, and the ends of God's government over the world, which sin tends to frustrate, are both infinitely great; and therefore, if the duty and happiness of the intellectual world are to be provided for, it must be by the eternity of punishments inflicted on the of-

fenders, as well as of the rewards conferred on the obedient, that the free, the moral part of the creation may in no period of duration want the benefit of the necessary example arising from the effects both of obedience and transgression. Before it was known in what degree God would punish sin, the enjoyment of his favour, and of celestial glory, was not sufficient to keep even the angels in their duty, and to prevent rebellion in heaven. What remedy now can we conceive for the like evil in time to come, but that sin should be as lastingly penal, as obedience is rewardable?

Here it is objected, first, That this doctrine makes all sins equal, because infinite; which is false; for all infinites of the same kind are not equal. A cubical foot of gold contains more parts than a cubical inch, although the latter is infinitely divisible. And all sins, directly and intentionally committed against God, are rendered infinite in regard to the infinity of the object, which by no means takes away the greater or less aggravations, wherewith, in other respects, they were attended. For instance, murder is a greater sin than adultery, and that than theft, considered in themselves, or in respect to the temptations to each, and the injury done by each; but, in regard to God, and his law, they fall under quite another consideration; for the committal of any one is, in his sight, as the committal of all the rest, because his authority and law are equally despised in them all. 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all; for he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law;' James ii. 10, 11.

Again, it is observed, that if one sin may be thus rendered infinite, another may, for the same reason; and the same man may be guilty of both, and consequently can be punished only for one; because he hath merited an infinite punishment by the one, and cannot be twice infinitely punished; whereas justice requires he should be proportionably punished for the other.

This at first sight looks like a shrewd objection, and the more so, as it is introduced by a very great man.* But in truth it is but a mere quibble. He who hath been guilty

* Episcopius.

of many sins may be punished with more stripes, than he who was guilty of fewer, and yet both for ever. As their crimes were infinite, but unequal; so their punishment may be infinite, and yet unequal. That all transgressions of God's law are, in respect to him, equal, St. James hath already told us. But that in themselves they are unequal, and will, though everlastingly, be unequally punished, our Saviour hath plainly assured us. 'The servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes;' Luke xii. 47, 48. He also gives us to understand, Matt. xxiv. 51, 'that he who, in the absence of his master, began to smite his fellow-servants, &c. shall have his portion with the hypocrites,' or, as it is, Luke xii. 46, 'with the unbelievers;' that is, with dissemblers and infidels, the very worst of men, who are to undergo the severest punishment; because they pretend to that religion which they have not, and commit all manner of wickedness under the mask of piety, and in the name of God. It is with an eye to the same persons that he saith, Matt. xxiii. 14, 'Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.' The inhabitants of Sodom and Capernaum will both be condemned at the last day; but 'it will be more tolerable for the former,' as our Saviour assured the latter, Matt. xi. 23, 24.

On the whole, our sins are committed against infinite reason to the contrary, against infinite Majesty, against infinite goodness, against a law of infinite importance, against a government of infinite utility. They are committed voluntarily by men, who, in the act of sin, know they offend God, and please the devil. They shew a contempt of all God hath done for us, even of his own precious blood, the value of which is infinite; and therefore are, in these respects, infinitely heinous; from whence it follows, that they may justly be punished with endless disgrace and misery.

Some, more ingenious than wise,[b] are for splitting the difference between God's word and their own opinions, on

[b] Episcopius.

this important article of our faith. They allow the eternal separation of the wicked from God and heaven, or the punishment of loss; but deny the reality of positive pains, or torments, to be endured for ever. But is not eternal exclusion, eternal shame, disgrace, remorse, an infinite punishment? And why, if as they insist, sins are to be punished in proportion to their size, are they thus infinitely punished, unless their sins are infinite? Their own principle, we see, condemns their concession; but, tenacious as they are of that principle, the Scriptures extort the concession, to the confusion of those who make it, and who by the same rule ought to allow also the positive punishments of the damned, since they are as expressly affirmed in Scripture, as the negative. Besides, this scheme actually makes all sins equal, if estimated by the punishment, which is one and the same for all delinquents; namely, separation from God, and exclusion from the joys of heaven; at least, if there is any inequality, or degrees, in this purely exclusive punishment, the more inveterately wicked any soul thus excluded is, the less grievous will this punishment be to such a soul, because the less fitted to relish the joys of that place out of which it is shut, and consequently the less inclined to regret its loss. Thus, on this wise hypothesis, the greater the sinner is, the more mildly shall he be punished, directly contrary to the rules of justice.

Others take upon them to say, the wicked, after enduring the torments of hell for a certain time, will be thereby reformed, and restored to the favour of God. Who hath told them this? What is there either in reason or Scripture, to make us believe the pains of hell have this purgative quality; that hell is a nursery for heaven; or that the devil, who tempts us in this life, will become a preacher of righteousness, and the pastor of a flock for Christ, in the next? No, no; as the mercy and long-suffering patience of God encourages the perversely foolish to the sins of impenitence and presumption here, so it is most rationally to be apprehended, his vengeance will drive them to the sins of blasphemy and despair hereafter. Can hell purge those, who could not be cleansed by the blood of Christ? Or will the damned permit the devil to work that in them by fire and brimstone, which they would not suffer God to work by

grace, and the tenders of his mercy, when they were free? But even supposing they should, what figure will these forced reformades, converted by the devil, make in heaven on the strength of a renovation, wherein the providence of the Father, the gospel of Christ, and the grace of the Holy Ghost had no hand; wherein choice, liberty, or the love of God and goodness, had no share; whereof anguish or terror was the only cause; whereto relief from the horrible effects of sin, not hatred of sin itself, was the only motive?

In opposition to this amazing supposition, we are told, that 'those who were unjust, must be unjust still; and those who were filthy, must be filthy still.' We are told, 'that without shedding of blood there is no remission;' that the blood of Christ is that alone which 'taketh away sin;' and that 'there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin,' for the sins of such as 'transgress wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth,' of such as 'have trodden under-foot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing; and have done despite unto the Spirit of grace; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.' We are also assured, that 'it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, andh ave tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame.' If this is true of the wicked, even in this life, why shall it not be true of the damned after the final sentence shall be passed upon them?

There are others again, who maintain that God, after punishing the wicked in proportion to their sins, will annihilate them all. For an opinion so bold, and attended with consequences of such importance to the moral world, they give us two reasons, neither of them at all convincing. First, They say, our sins are temporary and finite, and therefore cannot justly be punished with endless torments. And, secondly, They judge, the wicked cannot be reformed in hell, nor ever rendered fit for an admission into heaven; and therefore must be reduced to nothing. This piece of practical

Atheism prevails strangely at present, even among men who would take it very ill to be told, they are no Christians.

Whether this opinion is founded in truth, or not, the best way is, according to our Saviour's rule, to judge of it by its fruits. Do these men, who have such a fellow-feeling with the devil and the damned, stand in no need of the indulgence, afforded by their principle, to vice and wickedness of all kinds? Have they no reason to apprehend themselves concerned in the question about eternal torments? Nothing in their consciences to whisper a wish to their judgments, that they themselves should hereafter be nothing? Is it all pure, abstracted, disinterested, pity for others, without the least mixture of compassion? How godlike is their goodness, who being free from sin themselves, and assured of their own happiness, find such tenderness for the sinner, for the reprobate, even for the author of all evil! This is indeed a very soothing opinion, and wonderfully serves to set forth both his good nature who holds it, and to mollify the severity of guilt in those who feel it. Were there no other reason but this, I should be apt to suspect its truth; for it seems to be a maxim, that nothing can be true, which, of its own nature, encourages sin; as it does, that nothing can be false, which is necessary to the prevention or cure of sin; because, otherwise, sin would have a foundation in the nature of things, and one truth, at least, to countenance it; from whence it would follow, that an evil principle must have had a hand in the creation, and therefore probably in the government, of the world. If a good being supremely and uncontrollably governs the world, he must do every thing consistent with the freedom of his moral creatures, to prevent their falling into sin and misery. Should he so contrive things, as that temptations to sin should be great and present, and his rewards and punishments little and future, he could not expect to be well obeyed. That our temptations to sin are present, and also very strong, the nihilators themselves will readily grant; because they make it a reason for that indulgence their principle promises. Now is it not evident, that he, who believes the punishment of sin will be temporary, hath less, infinitely less, reason to resist temptation, than he who believes it will be eternal? And is there not, therefore, infinitely less reason to hope, he will

never fall, or, if fallen, that he should rise again? If there is but one supreme, eternal Being; if that Being is infinitely good, just, and powerful; there must be an infinite reason against moral evil, that is, against the only possible evil; and this reason may lie as well in the infinity of punishment, as in that of reward. It can indeed be nothing else, but one or both. But creatures can neither enjoy nor suffer infinitely, any otherwise than in point of duration; which proves the eternity, either of the reward or punishment. Now, there is not so much reason for the eternity of a reward, which we can never deserve, as for the eternity of a punishment, which we may, if our sins are infinite. Since I have been here again obliged to mention the infinity of sin, I beg leave to be understood in this sense, not that such things are infinite as are committed under the ignorance of God's law, or without any tincture of contempt, or an intentional insult on his majesty; but such only as give a character to our whole lives; such as we persevere in to the last, although we know God abhors them, and us for committing them; such in a word, as on the whole, shew we are by choice the servants of Satan, and not of God.

A man of this stamp is infinitely guilty in the sight of God; because, as far as in him lies, he disappoints the whole intention of the creation. God made all things here for man, and man for himself. But if man turns every thing here to an occasion of sin, and himself to rebellion, how are the wise and gracious intentions of God to be answered? Will a temporary punishment, followed by annihilation, make amends? No; God did not make him in vain; yet in vain he must have been made, if, after a life of sin, and a short punishment, he is to be unmade again. Surely, the infinitely wise Being who created and disposes all things, can turn this his creature, who would not be his servant, to a better account. He can even make him serve the purposes of righteousness by exhibiting in him to all eternity a wholesome example of his indignation at sin, that angels and men may see, and fear to offend. This way, and this only, God may bring universal good out of moral evil, and make either happy, or at least useful, servants of all his moral creatures; insomuch that what St. Paul said, Rom. xi. to the Gentile converts, concerning the unbelieving Jews, may for ever be

truly said to the just, concerning the benefits they will derive from the example made of the wicked; 'If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world—behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but towards you goodness, if you continue in his goodness; otherwise you also shall be cut off.'

But, over and above all this, God may apply the wicked to other particular uses, of which, at present, we can form no determinate idea. Throughout his universal empire he may have offices and stations of inconceivable use to the whole, which none can so well fill as the wicked; because confinement, disgrace, and pain, may be as essential to those offices, as they are to the business of a miner, or a galley-slave. As, for instance, they are threatened in Scripture with a punishment of fire; how do we know but the inscrutable phenomena of that element may arise from the agency of evil spirits, who, although chained themselves in the blackness of darkness toward the centre of a luminous body, may, in order to some small mitigation of their pain, so elaborate the combustible matter as to be the cause of that motion whereby the rays of light and heat are propelled towards, and from, the surface? This supposition will always have a possibility to countenance it, till the nature of fire, and the activity of light, are discovered to be the effects of some other cause. But be this as it will, there is all the reason in the world for supposing, God obliges them to answer some other ends of their creation, besides that of exemplifying his justice; and, in order to it, assigns them such a situation as may render them physically, as well as morally, useful. The devil, who, from a prince in heaven, is become a tyrant in hell, is continued in being, not for the evil he is permitted, but for the good he is forced, to do. While he is himself the highest example of God's justice, he is also the punisher of those he tempts to sin; and will, as the executioner of vengeance, be compelled to do more good, on the whole, to the moral world, than God will suffer him, as a tempter, to do evil. What other services he renders to God against his will, in his station as 'prince of the air,' we know not; but we are sure he does not hold that principality merely on the merit of doing mischief. To shut up this argument; we are not to conclude for the

annihilation of the damned, till we are sure infinite wisdom and power can by no means serve itself either of them or their punishment.

It is to no manner of purpose, that the favourers of annihilation make use of the words 'death' and 'destruction,' as applied to the wicked in Scripture, in order to wrest a proof from thence of their falling into nothing. The word 'death' is used by the sacred writers in three different senses. Sometimes it signifies 'a death unto sin,' sometimes 'a separation of soul and body,' and sometimes 'a separation of the soul from God,' in order to its eternal confinement in hell, which is called 'the second death.' The first happens to men while yet alive. The second, when the soul and body are disunited. And the last is called death; not because it is attended with annihilation, which hath no analogy with any kind of death; but metaphorically; because, as in a natural death, the body is cut off from the soul, its only principle of life, so, in this, the soul is cut off from God, who is the life, that is, the happiness and joy, of the soul. If a wicked soul ceased to exist on its departure from the body, how could it be 'judged, or sent away into punishment with the devil and his angels at the last day?' Now, after this, we are assured, 'there shall be no more death;' that is, no new deaths of any kind; so that, if there is to be an annihilation of the damned, no argument is to be drawn for it from any use of the word 'death' in Scripture.

Neither does the word 'destruction' afford them any advantage, there being no one place in all the Bible where it signifies an absolute annihilation of any substance; no, not even when it is called 'utter destruction,' as in Zech. xiv. 11. Indeed, when it is applied to worldly power, sin, death, &c. which are either but nonentities, or mere modes of things, it sometimes, not always, intimates a total abolition of the subject. When it is applied to kingdoms or cities, it threatens dissolution to societies, and ruin to houses; that is, dissipation to the mere assemblages; but by no means annihilation to the men or materials whereof they consist. When it is applied to men simply, it often signifies disappointment to their schemes, downfal to their ambition or power; or a substitution of poverty and affliction, for wealth and pleasure; never more than a natural death. But when

it is applied to the incorrigibly wicked, it signifies expressly their final punishment or damnation, not annihilation; for, after all that is intimated by 'destruction' is actually executed on them, we hear of them again existing in their torments. This might easily be shewn from many passages. I shall only take notice of two. Our Saviour saith, Matt. vii. 13, 'Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, or hell, and many there be which go in thereat.' Now, that hell does not annihilate the damned, though it is here called destruction, is plain from the parable of the rich man, whom we find existing in the midst of its torments. Hence it appears, that destruction only signifies misery without hope of relief. Again St. Paul tells us, Heb. ii. 14, that 'our Saviour took on him the flesh and blood of a man, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death,' that is, the devil. Here the devil is expressly said to have been destroyed by the death of Christ; but surely not annihilated; for we know he is to be judged at the last day, and punished afterward; and therefore what follows, but that, by 'destruction' in this place, we are to understand the abolition of his empire, namely, sin, and its effects, in all who should embrace the gospel of Christ, and believe in his death?

It is easy to see what men mean by such dissolute objections, founded on arguments so evasive. They pretend the honour of God, and tenderness to their fellow-creatures; whereas nothing can be more manifest, than that they mean all the time an indulgence for themselves, for the vilest part of themselves; and preach up this indulgence among their acquaintances for no other reason, than because they cannot securely enough believe in it, till they have a crowd to believe with. For this goodly end they represent us, who believe in the eternity of future torments, as cruel and inhuman; not seeming to consider, that, although the infliction of such torments should be ever so unjust and cruel, we are not to be blamed for it, since we are not the inflictors; nay, nor considering, that, while we believe their eternity, we must be really cruel and unfaithful in the highest degree, should we be silent on the awful subject. But they indeed ought to reflect a little more closely, whether, as they cannot be absolutely sure, that the punishment of the wicked will

be only temporary, they do not act a most ensnaring and cruel part in giving vice such hopes of indulgence, as in the generality of men, will have the same effects with the hope of total impunity. For my own part, I solemnly declare, there is nothing in revelation I am more thoroughly convinced of than the eternity of those torments. This declaration I make, not that I presume to hope it will have any weight, merely because it is mine, but that it may be my apology for often and strongly insisting on the terrible doctrine; and surely it is a sufficient one. That clergyman, who believes, as I do, can in nothing shew himself so truly tender and affectionate to his flock, as in dwelling often on the dreadful subject, in painting it to the life in all its horrors, and in urging it home on the hearts of the insensible with every argument that can convince, and every expression that can alarm. He cannot possibly exceed on such a subject; for, say what he will, he must still be short of infinity. The Scriptures will best supply him with materials, whether he aims at convincing or rousing. Let him say after God, and fear not, though the wicked should wince, when he lances; and the affectedly nice ascribe that shock to their delicacy, which is felt only in their guilt. They may say he is unmannerly for talking of hell to the genteel; but this is not to move him; for hell was made for the genteel, and for them that 'fare sumptuously every day,' as well as for meaner mortals. If they would have him speak to them only of heaven, let them shew him in their lives, that they are in the way to heaven. But if avarice, or ambition, or pride, or oppression, or if riot, sensuality, lust, and villany, shew themselves triumphant in their actions, he ought to shew them the latitude of the road they are in, and 'the fire and brimstone,' yes, I say, 'fire and brimstone,' in which it ends. If they would have him delicate in his preaching, let them be delicate in the morality of their actions. But what right hath the stupid drunkard to soft words; or the hardened adulterer, to delicate expressions; or the despicable trickster, to honorary addresses; or the infernal perverter of justice, the cruel oppressor, the horrid murderer, to tender or distant admonitions, from him who delivers a message of vengeance from the Lord of hosts, and the Judge of heaven and earth?

The truth is, they who call themselves the polite people of the world, and have indeed some delicacy in matters of ceremony, and external civility, are, generally speaking, so grossly corrupt and wicked, so foul in their affections, so outrageous in their passions, so enormous in their actions, that hell, opened in the most heightened descriptions, seems to be the very doctrine of all Christianity that is peculiarly adapted to them. But if they will not bear such descriptions, let them stay away from the house of God, and then we shall have less foppery and vanity, less bowing and grimace, less whispering and ogling, less inattention in the house of prayer; less pride, pomp, and parade, in the house of humiliation: we shall, in a word, have again congregations of Christians in our churches, instead of our present very genteel assemblies; which want nothing else but wine, dancing, and cards, to turn them into ridottoes. Then the plain, well-meaning, people, who come hither to confess their sins, and deprecate the judgments of an offended God, will not be perpetually called off from that solemn work, by every new idol that enters to flaunt it in silk and jewels. We Christians meet here for no other purpose, but to worship God, and hear his word; and we shall do both the better for having none among us, but such as come with the same intention. If the mention of hell and damnation from the pulpit should scare others away, it is neither a loss to religion nor us, even although they should go to soothe their guilt with cards and dice, which is but an insult on God's day; whereas they seldom come hither, but to insult that, his house and worship.

It is surely the business of every one who appears here as a Christian, to give all his attention to the prayers, while they are repeated; and to the word of God, when that is read or explained. If the Lord promises, let them hope and rejoice; if he threatens, let them fear and tremble. We must think both alike useful, both highly necessary, if we know ourselves. And it is the business of us, who officiate, not only to display the gracious promises of our Master to such as 'diligently seek for glory, honour, and immortality;' but also faithfully to inculcate his menaces of 'judgment, and fiery indignation,' to the stupid, the hardened, and impenitent; that, 'knowing the terror of the Lord, we may

thereby persuade men to forsake their sins, and turn to God.'

And now, may the holy and all-powerful Spirit prosper this blessed work in our hands, and your hearts, that all our hopes and fears may operate together for our entire conversion, and eternal salvation, through Christ our Saviour; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE XII.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF CHRISTIANITY, AND THE NECESSITY OF FAITH THEREIN.

HEB. x. 38, 39.

The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them who believe, to the saving of the soul.

THERE are two things strongly set before us in this passage of Scripture; first, That it is by faith we are to hope for salvation, and eternal life; and, secondly, That, of consequence, he who draws back from this faith, or apostatizes, having lost the principle of life, brings on himself perdition, or damnation. Immediately after asserting, in these words, the importance of faith, the apostle goes on to tell us what faith is; and then, by a long enumeration of its effects, shews what it had done before, and under the law, in them who had not received the promise, that is, the thing promised, which was Jesus, 'the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God;' chap. xii. 2. In this we see the Christian faith sufficiently distinguished from all other kinds of faith, both by him in whom we are to believe, and by that

which we are to believe of him; namely, that it was he who was promised by God, not only as a Redeemer to Israel, but as that 'seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed' with light, through his instructions; and with remission of sins, through his blood. To inculcate this doctrine, and thereby to shew the superiority of the Christian above the Mosaic dispensation, was the scope of the whole epistle, the substance whereof the inspired author recapitulates, and farther enforces, as he proceeds, from my text to the end.

Whatsoever therefore this great teacher hath told us, either in person, or by his Spirit, speaking through the apostles, is the matter of that faith, on which so great a stress is laid. God did not become our Redeemer and Comforter, to teach us trifles, or things of so little moment, as to leave us excusable, if inattentive to them. If he speaks, we may be sure it is on a subject of great importance; we may be sure it is perfectly true in itself, and highly useful to mankind; and therefore cannot be neglected by us, without a grievous crime, nor contradicted, without a mortal sin. But as what he hath delivered, although highly important in all its parts, is not equally important; so the ignorance of some things is both a smaller loss, and a less sin, than that of others. By faith, when it is made necessary to the salvation of all, to whom sufficient evidence is offered, is to be understood a firm belief of the important articles, or doctrines, which relate alike to all mankind, as containing whatsoever is to be universally known or practised. What these are we must know, and that they are true, we must believe, or we cannot be saved; we, I mean, to whom God hath been pleased to communicate the means of this knowledge and faith.

Nothing in Scripture is more clearly and strongly declared, than that faith in Christ is the first, the fundamental means of salvation. St. Paul takes a world of pains to shew us, that it is 'faith which justifies;' and not only in my text, but in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, and in the third of his Epistle to the Galatians, repeats what we find, Hab. ii. 4, 'The just shall live by his faith;' plainly intimating, that he is rendered just in the sight of God by faith, and, being justified, is rewarded, through the imputed

merits of Christ, applied by faith, with eternal life. Christ himself lays this down as the great fundamental: 'As Moses,' says he, 'lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life,' John iii. 14, 15. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life;' chap. v. 24. 'I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth on me, shall never die;' John xi. 25, 26.

On the other hand, death, or damnation, is no less unquestionably and peremptorily threatened to unbelief; that is, to a want of faith in Christ, as already explained; and no wonder; for, if life is the consequent or reward of faith, death, by the rule of opposites, must be the consequent or punishment of infidelity. 'He that believeth not,' saith Christ, John iii. 18, 'is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him;' John iii. 36.

Here we see faith imputed to us for righteousness, and followed by the proper reward of righteousness, eternal life; and here also we see unbelief imputed to us for sin, and pursued with the proper punishment of sin, eternal death. To this not only the Deists, but the deistical Christians also, object, as a thing wholly unreasonable; for, say they, faith is not in our power; we neither choose nor refuse it; but always passively give it to that testimony which appears sufficient; and as passively withhold it, when the evidence appears defective. For this reason, we cannot look on it as matter of morality, nor consequently be persuaded, that God would declare it rewardable, or its opposite punishable, both being involuntary.

In answer to this, it must first be observed, that whereas the question is not about belief in general, but about Christian faith, which requiring an assent to certain mysteries, with a contempt whereof the pride man takes in his own conceitedly supposed wisdom, is oftentimes apt to fill him; and the practice of certain virtues and austerities, which his

dissolute heart is still more averse to; the receiving, or rejecting it, may depend materially on the will of him to whom it is proposed. He who receives it, not only because he thinks it hath God for its voucher, but because he hopes it will subdue in him those sinful inclinations his nature delights in, and who, before he received it, did, for the latter reason, give the due attention to its evidence, was, in so doing, both voluntary and virtuous. On the contrary, he who, foreseeing the disagreeable restraints it must lay him under, if embraced, will not, for that reason, give the requisite attention to its evidence, lest he should, in the end, find himself convinced of its truth, bewrays a very vicious disposition. Nay, as in this case God is concerned, the conduct of a man, to whom the Christian evidence is offered, becomes, on that account, infinitely more delicate; insomuch that if he refuses fully and fairly to examine, he adds impiety to his vice, even whether the evidence is qualified to stand the test or not; for it may, for aught he can judge, who will not properly inquire. Although the immediate seat of faith is in the understanding, it is nevertheless as much influenced by the will, as that is by the affections, and the heart. Hence it comes, that more evidence is requisite to convince a man of a truth he does not like, than is necessary for the conviction of another under no such bias. Experience even shews us, that where the bias is very prevalent, it averts the mind from all consideration of the proofs offered, or arms and hardens it against them, when they are obtruded. Piety, humility, self-diffidence, and integrity, which are all of them virtuous dispositions, are as so many preparatives to the faith of a Christian; for they dispose him to a ready reception of his doctrines, in case his understanding shall be satisfied with the sufficiency of its vouchers. But negligence will not suffer a man to examine, because it is attended with trouble; concupiscence, because conviction may lead to mortification; avarice, because it may inculcate restitution; fear, because it may awaken guilt. 'Woe unto him,' says the wise son of Sirach, 'that is faint-hearted! for he believeth not.' Suspicion and jealousy seldom fail to produce incredulity; and as, generally speaking, they are but the imputation of a man's own falsehood to others, so they forbid his reposing a confidence in any, though reason

should ever so strongly encourage it. Of all passions, pride is the greatest enemy to faith; because it is always too wise to be taught; too sagacious to rely on reports; too wary to believe what it does not see; too sufficient to need assistance; so conscious of its own merit, as to need no Redeemer; so satisfied with its dignity, as to need no intercessor; and, in a word, so every way capable of directing itself, and dictating to the whole world, that if it hath not chanced to be born to Christianity, that religion must not presume to expect the honour of its assent. Our Saviour was well aware of this, when he spoke thus to such as despised his mission, notwithstanding the evidence of his miracles, wrought before their eyes to prove it; 'How can ye believe, which receive honour of one another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?'

If our religion is from God, the arguments which support it must be sufficient to convince the rational, the candid, and the well-disposed, who, in case he closes with it, closes in opposition to all the corruptions and sinful dispositions of his nature; and, even in him, these may be enough, to make his faith a high and noble instance of virtue, in the sight of that Master, who will receive and reward every thing as such, that does honour to his Son.

If our religion is from God, its evidence must be sufficient; for God knew what was sufficient, and was too wise and good to leave the proofs of a religion defective, which cost him the life of his Son to introduce. If, nevertheless, any one shall resist this evidence, where are we to look for the source of his infidelity? Is it not in his will, corrupted and perverted by a bad heart, which either suffers him not sensibly to consider that evidence, or so blinds the eye of his judgment, as to leave him but a very faint perception of its light? St. Paul tells us, the Israelites, 'who fell in the wilderness, could not enter into the promised rest, because of unbelief,' Heb. iii. 18, 19; and, making use of them as an example, he says, ver. 12, 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.' Hence it evidently appears that the inspired apostle charges infidelity on the obliquity of the heart. Since this is the case, it is not without good reason that God threatens unbelief with damnation, thereby giving that sin a very high rank in the

catalogue of immoralities; and no wonder; for all that God hath done to prove, and thereby to introduce and perpetuate, his religion, is trampled on by the infidel, who biassed by his corrupt dispositions, will neither be guided by his own reason, nor suffer it to listen to the word of God; and therefore is answerable for all the revelations communicated in order to his instruction, all the miracles performed for his conviction, and, what is more than all, for the blood of Christ spilt, in order to his pardon and salvation.

The objection thus answered, it will be now worth our while to consider, as life eternal is annexed to faith, and as faith is of different degrees, whether any degree might be sufficient. We may easily regulate our judgment on this point, if we know what is the end of faith. The end of faith is twofold; first, To call us to repentance and newness of life, by placing strongly before our eyes the great things of another world, that we may 'walk by faith, and not by sight,' 2 Cor. v. 7. as men who expect to 'appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad,' ver. 10. Secondly, To entitle us to salvation, through the sacrifice of our Saviour's blood. In respect to the first end, faith is the only efficacious instrument of our reformation, whereby a good life for the future may be secured. And, in respect to the last, it is the only means of applying to ourselves the benefits of Christ's death, in order to pardon for what is passed. Now if faith be not strong and operative, it can never reform our lives; because it hath the world, the devil, and the flesh, enemies not easily subdued, to contend with. And yet, if it fails as to the first end, it must, of consequence, fail also as to the second; because we can have no title to the benefits of Christ's death, but through the covenant, whereof repentance is one condition. 'As the body,' says St. James, 'without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also,' James ii. 26. This divine grace, when it rises to a sufficient height and strength, never fails to reform the manners of him who is blessed with it; and then, as soon as it hath done this, ripens into a comfortable hope, which can never be well founded, but on reformation, the only fruit and proof of a saving faith. But in case this grace is de-

fective, as it works no amendment, so it degenerates into fear and despair, which, if the person thus unhappily circumstanced can reflect at all, are in him the natural result of faith, and sin unreformed. The former is the faith of saints, which fills them with bright expectations, and heavenly raptures; the latter is the faith of devils, 'who believe and tremble,' James ii. 19.

Since it pleased Almighty God to bestow on us, who live under the light of the gospel, sufficient means of faith, we are guilty of a great and horrible sin, both against God, and our own souls, if we pass our days in ignorance of its fundamental articles; or even if, ascending a little above a state of mere ignorance, on a slight inquiry, we stop short in the region of doubts; because, in either case, the whole of divine revelation, with the blood of Christ, and eternity, are held by us at so low a price, as not to be deemed deserving of even a less anxious search, than we should readily enough bestow on a yet dubious title to a very inconsiderable estate. Nothing can be more indispensably our duty, than carefully to examine into the grounds and reasons of a religion, which, for aught we can possibly know, before we fairly try it, may give sufficient evidence of its truth, and prove itself a matter of infinitely higher concern to us, than all we can hope for, or even desire, in this world. But if, on examination, Christianity should appear to be the true religion, it will be then our duty to inquire as carefully after its fundamental articles of faith and practice; because on them our attention ought chiefly to be turned, in order to secure the titles, and reap the benefits therein proposed to us by its author. Nothing we can do will so much contribute to the establishment of our faith, as inquiries of this nature, provided they set out with a hearty and honest desire to know the truth, and are conducted with due diligence and candour. However, as, on our own strength, we can proceed no farther than to a rational conviction, and as the Holy Spirit only can raise us to an active saving faith, it is our business earnestly to solicit his assistance, that we may neither in our researches miss the truth, nor, when we have found it, 'hold it in unrighteousness,' like men who carry a light that serves for no better purpose, than to shew others, that the bearers are out of their way.

Having seen what ought to be the degree or strength of an effectual saving faith, let us now so far inquire into the object-matter of this faith, as to find out, if we can, the fundamental articles necessary to be believed by all Christians, in order to their eternal salvation; observe, I say, Christians, because I am speaking only to such, and endeavouring to shew, what ought to be the fundamentals of their faith, who agree in this, that the Scriptures are the word of God, but differ widely as to the articles made necessary by those Scriptures to the eternal salvation of believers. For this reason, although to believe, that the Bible is the word of God, is a primary fundamental, I shall say nothing more of it here, but that, as we all believe in this fundamental, we are to make the sacred books the rule of our faith, and, by the use of that rule, to trace out the other fundamentals, so as, if possible, to remove the unhappy disputes concerning them, that no rational and well-meaning Christian may be at an uncertainty about a matter of such infinite consequence to him.

As the holy Scriptures, then, are the word of that infinitely wise and gracious God, who gave them to us for our edification, that we might know what we are to believe and practise, we must take it for granted, they are sufficiently qualified to answer this end; for, if otherwise, they must argue a defect either in the wisdom or goodness of their author. He was surely wise enough to know what was necessary to our instruction, and too compassionate to leave us in the dark about that which was necessary.

Whatsoever obscurity therefore there may be in some parts of Scripture, yet the revelation therein given must have been in vain, if there are not other parts so necessary as to be plain, and so plain as to be intelligible in the same sense to all, who are disposed to believe God, rather than themselves.

If now the word of God plainly sets forth any thing to us as necessary, it must so set forth these two things:

First, What we are to worship.

Secondly, How we are to be saved.

Yet, absolutely necessary as these points undoubtedly are, we have, to the reproach of Christianity among half Christians, a world of disputes about them; so that even,

in respect to them, either the Scriptures must be as obscure and defective, as the open enemies of Christ, on account of these very disputes, insist they are; or they, whoever they may be, who hold the wrong side in such disputes, are in fact his worst enemies, though they call themselves by his name.

As to the first head; if idolatry, or polytheism, is a damnable sin, insomuch that no one, who hath an opportunity of knowing there is but one only God, can be saved, if he worships any other, or any more gods; the worship of the one only true God must be a fundamental. Now, that there is but one infinite Being, or God; that worship consists in dependence and prayer; and that this worship is entirely restrained to him alone; I have, in a former discourse, fully proved, by the express words of Scripture.

The Antitrinitarians, however, as well as we, worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, believing them to be three distinct persons. But whereas we believe them to be of one nature and substance, whereby we sufficiently defend ourselves against the charge, at least, of avowed, intentional, polytheism; they deny the sameness of their nature and substance, affirm the two last to be creatures, and call each God, but say he is only a delegated god; by which it is evident, they avow the worship of three gods; and are therefore, to all intents and purposes, actually intentional Polytheists. They will not indeed admit the appellation; because it is, among Christians, a name of the highest reproach; but such is the notoriety and flagrancy of the fact, as any one may see in the writings not only of their private authors, but of public bodies, that no name can more properly fit the sect it is given to, than that of Polytheists does the Antitrinitarian, or Trinitarian, as it falsely and impudently calls itself; I say falsely, because it worships a Trinity of three gods; and therefore judge ye whether I wrong them in adding impudently also.

If the worship of one only God were not a fundamental, why is the worship of all other gods absolutely forbidden in the first commandment, which is the basis of all faith and duty? Why does our Saviour say, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,' pursuant to what is written in the law? If this were not a fundamental,

why is the worship of other gods made so very penal? 'Thou, shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods;—(for the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth,' Deut. vi. 13—15. I might add numberless texts to these; but to what purpose? Our adversaries will readily distinguish them all away by saying, they worship the delegated gods only on account of the Supreme, in whom that worship terminates. But where in Scripture is that distinction made? Where is there any thing to give the least encouragement to it? Is there the least hint of a permission to worship, that is, to depend on, or pray to, more gods than one? Nay, is there not every thing said and done to prevent it, that might be expected from the true God, who represents himself to us as, in this respect, 'a jealous God, a God that will not give his honour to another?' By the same authority, and in the same sense of the words, God and worship, we are commanded to worship the one true God, and forbidden to worship any other gods but him. Who shall presume to give other senses to these words, in order to countenance that very crime, which is every where represented as so extremely heinous in the sight of God, and threatened with his utmost vengeance?

We, it is true, worship Christ, and the Holy Ghost; but this can by no means bring on us the charge of Polytheism; first, Because we say, the three Persons constitute but one God; which shews, at least, we do not profess the worship of more gods than one. Secondly, We insist, that Christ and the Holy Ghost are each called God in Scripture, and worshipped as such. That, in this case, we insist on nothing but the truth, I formerly shewed in two set discourses, which, I hope, put both these points beyond the possibility of a doubt with all who are willing to be concluded by Scripture, naked, and unsophisticated with forced interpretations. If Christ is God; if the the Holy Ghost is God; if they are set forth as such in Scripture; it is blasphemy to deny, that either is God; and profaneness to refuse divine worship, in the highest propriety of the words, to either. However, resolve the debate which way you will, it must end in a fundamental; that is, either in an absolute command, or in an

absolute prohibition, to worship the second and third Persons. As there is no medium between the nature of God and a creature; and as we are to demean ourselves to both, according to their respective natures; so the worship we pay to God ought infinitely to transcend the respect we pay to the highest creature; and therefore can in no sense admit of the same name. The infinite and finite can by no conclusion of ideas, or juggle of words, be excusably expressed by the same term. Neither therefore can the sentiments of love, veneration, and dependence, wherewith our hearts are affected towards them, admit of the same expressions, without absurdity and blasphemy.

An indifferent person, who had not read the Scriptures, on considering the tenets of the Antitrinitarians, could not avoid presuming, that the divinity and worship of the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are strongly insisted on in those Scriptures, since the opposers of their real divinity are forced to assign them a delegated divinity, and a subordinate worship, directly in the teeth of their own avowed principle, that there is but one God. Were he afterward fairly to examine the sacred books, and to take their sense concerning God, as he does the sense of other books, he must be astonished to find a plurality of gods deduced from writings, wherein it is so often and so peremptorily condemned; and the worship of more gods than one so severely prohibited, or so dreadfully punished, in almost every page. He would find all divine worship absolutely appropriated to the one infinite Being only, and this appropriation made the source and basis of all the religion prescribed in either Testament. He would find the distinction between God, or the infinite Being, and the creature, set so wide, as to forbid the possibility of another distinction, consistent with Scripture, between a false and a subordinate God. In short, he could not help observing, that either the faith and practice of an Antitrinitarian are directly opposite to each other, inasmuch as he pays divine honours to that which he does not believe to be God; or, at least, that his faith is opposite and contradictory to itself, inasmuch as he believes the same Being to be God, and yet but a creature.

To tell him there is one Supreme, and other subordinate gods, could not satisfy him; because the Scriptures have

restrained the word God to one sense only, when worship is annexed to it, and have laid down this restriction as the first fundamental of true religion. If, after all, he found the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, set forth, each as God, by the same writer, who insists there is but one God, whatsoever inconsistency he might charge that writer with, he could not suppose him guilty of an intention to contradict himself; which he must have had, if he intended to say there is but one God, and yet three gods, without giving warning, that he took the word God in two infinitely different senses. So far a candid and indifferent reader of the Scriptures must condemn the Antitrinitarians, in case he brought the same mind with him to those writings, that he brings to all other books. On the contrary, howsoever he might at first, be surprised at our notions of the Trinity, he must, even from the beginning, perceive a close congruity between them and the Scriptures; an impossibility of avoiding them, without rejecting or doing violence to those Scriptures; and, on farther consideration, no other appearance of an objection to them, than what arises from the supposed inconsistency of a personal distinction in God, which his reason indeed might demur to, but could not, in the result, charge with a contradiction, as well because God is incomprehensible, as because God and Person are quite different ideas, and are never, either in reason or Scripture, put for each other.

These things being premised, it will be easy to prove, that faith in the Holy Trinity, that is, in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost (God throughout in the same sense of the word, and free of all equivocation), is fundamentally necessary to the very essense of Christianity. By the express command of Christ, Matt. xxviii. 19, we are all baptized in the name and authority of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that is, by the outward washing, our spiritual purgation from sin is signified, while the soul, thus cleansed, is initiated into the grand article of the Christian faith, by the form of words. We may be sure, had any other article been more fundamental, or more essentially comprehensive of Christianity, this must have given place to it, as fitter for so great a purpose, when the soul is first dedicated to God, and engaged, by covenant, to that faith or religion,

the whole of which is contained in, or necessarily results from, the form authoritatively used in this introductory contract. To understand these words rightly, and to believe in them firmly, is to understand and believe as a Christian ought to do. But to know the stress that is laid on them, and how far they are made fundamental, is every whit as necessary, as either to understand or believe the words themselves; for how otherwise shall our attention or inquiry, as to either, be sufficiently roused? Our blessed Saviour, at the same time that he commands his disciples to baptize all nations by this form, shews how necessary it is, that all who are baptized should believe in that form; for he says, Mark xvi. 15, 16, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.'

Now, it is to be remarked here, that, by this form of words, we are received into the body of Christ, jointly and equally, in the name, and by the authority, of the three Persons; that hereby God sets his seal to the covenant, authorizing the institution in these very words, that the new Christian also sets his seal to that covenant, solemnly promising faith, in the true and real meaning of the same words. Now, if there should be any difficulty in apprehending the meaning of the form, or any dispute about it, how is either to be removed? Is it not by recourse to other parts of Scripture? The word God is not affixed in the form to any of the Three Persons. But in the Scripture, at large, each Person is represented to us as God, in one unequivocal import of the word. This I have abundantly proved, in former Discourses. If then Scripture is the safest expositor of itself, if we are obliged to believe other parts of Scripture, as well as this, and if other Scriptures give us all the reason divine revelation can give, for believing the Father to be God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God, it follows indisputably, that the doctrine of the Trinity, as we hold it, is a fundamental, or rather the great fundamental, of our religion. The church, in the earliest ages, looked on it as such, and considered it as comprehending the whole of Christianity. Accordingly, out of this they framed the first creed, whereby the catechumens answered at baptism, only rendering it, for that purpose, a little more explanatory. The answer of a

catechumen, fairly and closely translated, was this; 'I believe in the one God, who is the Father, who is the Son, and who is the Holy Ghost.' The article in the original Greek set before God, and then separately before each of the Three Persons, shews, that the word God was distinctly applied to each. This I formerly observed, as also that Tertullian expresses this common faith of Christians as strictly as truth, and the Latin tongue, will bear it: his words are to this effect; 'The Father God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God; every one of them God.' All the fathers writing against heretics, or, on any occasion, declaring the Christian faith, did it on the basis of this form; or rather, did hardly any thing else, than set forth the doctrine of the Trinity. Throughout all ages of the church, as heresies and contentions concerning the faith arose, all the creeds drawn up by particular bishops, or councils, howsoever enlarged by explanatory clauses, for the censure of those heresies, were planned on the form of words used at baptism, and had the doctrine of the Trinity for their basis.

Nothing more need be said to shew, that this doctrine is actually the great fundamental of our faith, or that the anathemas denounced in Scripture, by our Saviour, and by the Holy Spirit, against unbelievers, were really and truly denounced against such as should disbelieve or corrupt this doctrine.

Let those now, who, pretending to be Christians, would represent this doctrine as erroneous, or those who, with more cunning, endeavour to persuade us it is not fundamental, in order the more easily to reconcile our minds, thus rendered indifferent, to an opposite doctrine, consider, whether the point, held one way or the other, can be less than fundamental. They may read us fine lectures on charity, and tell us, that all anathemas pronounced on others, be their tenets what they will, are grievous breaches of Christian charity. They may represent the doctrine of the Trinity as too mysterious and subtle to be made an article of faith necessary to the salvation of mankind. And all this may sound plausibly in the ears of an age not distinguishable among other ages, for a propensity to faith and fidelity, in any sense. Yet it should still be remembered, that we call ourselves Christians; that we call the Scriptures the rule of our faith;

and that, consequently, we must either give the lie to our own professions, or be ready to say, after Christ and his apostles, whatsoever they have thought fit to say, 'lest we be found to contradict the Holy Ghost.' Now, the anathemas pronounced on the impugners of the Trinity are pronounced by the Holy Ghost. Let us therefore have a care of saying, they are uncharitable in themselves; for, in that case, we charge the author with a crime, which we look on as highly heinous in a man. And why heinous in a man, who only repeats what the Holy Ghost hath first uttered, and wishes from his soul, that every human creature was of this faith, to which alone salvation is promised? It hath been already seen, that faith is, in its own nature, a rewardable, and infidelity, a punishable, turn of mind. God therefore is justified in denouncing damnation to the one, and eternal life to the other; and since, consistently with justice, he may, and, in pursuance of infinite wisdom, he actually hath, determined thus to punish and reward them, it is an effect of his goodness to declare this determination in time, that mankind, sufficiently warned thereby, may not presume to slight that revelation, which it cost so much to introduce into the world.

It is from the publication of this divine anathema that the very essence of a fundamental, or that without which we cannot be saved, is gathered. But were we not at liberty to repeat this anathema, nor to apply it, as it is already applied in Scripture, the first publication of it must have been in vain; because a subsequent silence on the subject would, in a great measure, stifle the knowledge, and prevent the use God intended to make of the thing. Our adversaries may, as they usually do, endeavour to represent it and the faith to which it is annexed, as matters of little consequence; but it is our business to think quite otherwise of that, which the infinitely awful Being thought proper to lay so great a stress on. Much good may their very prudential neutrality do them, who can so comfortably, and often so profitably, join in a communion with a church that holds the divinity of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, or with one that denies it. For my part, I shall never make one among men, who change the 'word of God into a lie, who worship and serve the creature even as the Creator, who alone is God over all,

blessed for ever.' And sure I am, were it in my firm persuasion, that the second and third Persons in the Trinity are but creatures, no consideration in this world could ever induce me to communicate at the Lord's table with such as make it a fundamental article to believe them equal with the Father.

But, while we thus pronounce the anathema of Christ on such as disbelieve this, and the other fundamental articles of religion, it must be remembered, that we presume not to condemn any man; for, as to this matter, we know no man. We know not the capacities of men; what judgment this or the other person hath to discern the evidence of truth; what passions or prejudices to cope with; what strength of resolution to combat them. These things are known only to the Judge of all men. He therefore alone hath a right to punish the crime of infidelity, inasmuch as he only knows when, and how far, it is a crime. All we mean by repeating his anathema, is to affirm what he affirms, in a matter of so great concernment; to inculcate on our own, and other men's minds, the great duty of candour and diligence in our inquiries about religion; and to say, in short, what is most true, that every one who hath sufficient means of faith in the fundamental articles of Christianity, and yet disbelieves them, is in a state of damnation.

It is now time to take notice of the other point, which the Scriptures must make fundamental; namely, how we must be saved.

'What must I do to be saved?' said the keeper of the prison to Paul and Silas, whom he held in confinement. They answered, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;' Acts xvi. 30, 31. Here faith in Christ, without an explanation, as yet added, is made the necessary and infallible means of salvation, purely because, from that, all the other doctrines taught personally by Christ himself, or, in his name, by the apostles, will follow as requisite to be believed. Accordingly, on the jailer's closing with this, 'they spake unto him the word of the Lord,' ver. 32, 'and then baptized him,' ver. 33. We can be in no doubt whether, by 'the word of the Lord,' we are to understand the Christian covenant, since it was preached immediately preparatory to baptism. In preaching the word,

therefore, they must have taught their new disciple the articles and sanctions of the covenant, and given him to understand likewise how that covenant of peace was procured by the death and intercession of Christ; or how otherwise could he know what was required of him, as a Christian, or what it was to be 'baptized into the death of Christ?' Rom. vi. 3. And, as the very foundation of all, they must have instructed him in the doctrine of the Trinity; because he was to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Now, the conditions of this covenant are repentance, faith, and charity; and its sanctions, the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell; and that which procured the covenant, was the satisfaction, or atonement, made to the justice of God, for the sins of all men, by the death of Christ. Of faith I have spoken already. Of repentance and charity I need say nothing; both because there is no controversy about them, and also because they relate not to my design in this Discourse, which is to shew, that the doctrines proved in the foregoing Discourses are necessary to be believed, in order to eternal salvation. It remains now, that I should, pursuant to that design, prove that a belief in the satisfaction made by Christ's death, and in the sanctions of the new covenant, is as necessary to salvation, as the doctrines are true in themselves.

Two things are necessary to save a soul; the first, that the justice of God be satisfied for its sins; and the second, that the soul itself, by a thorough reformation of its sinful dispositions, be rendered an object of God's mercy.

The first, I have already proved, in a former Discourse, is done by the death of Christ; and here it is my business to shew, as briefly as I can, that the benefits of his death are applied to us by faith; which, when shewn, will prove this article of faith to be fundamental.

The words of our Saviour, John iii. 14, 15, already cited, shew this sufficiently; 'As Moses,' says he, 'lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up,' that is, crucified, 'that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Here we see, that Christ must have been crucified, in order that through faith in him, not simply, but as thus crucified and

slain, we might be saved from eternal death, and crowned with everlasting life.

St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, having compared the sacrifices of the law with that of Christ, and shewn that the latter only was efficacious, draws this conclusion; 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus—let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith;' Heb. x. 19. 22. Faith in what? No doubt, in that which gives us boldness, namely, 'the blood of Jesus.' This shews, as plainly as words can do it, that the benefit of Christ's blood, which is no less than remission of sins, is applied to the soul by faith. And, that we may see the necessity of this faith in a still stronger light, he proceeds to shew us what must follow, in case this faith should fail: 'He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy—Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God; and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing; and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?' ver. 28, 29. If faith in the blood of Christ is not a fundamental, why is the contrary here represented as so great a crime, and threatened with a sorer punishment than that death which was inflicted on the despisers of Moses' law? Or why is it said, 1 Cor. xi. 29, 'He that eateth and drinketh the supper of the Lord unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body?' In this sacrament the sacrifice of Christ is represented, and the benefits of his death conveyed to the worthy communicant, while damnation is denounced to the unworthy. Now, what can so effectually disqualify a man, on this occasion, as a want of that faith in the efficacy of the great sacrifice, which alone can teach him to discern or distinguish between the Lord's body, and the body of any other sacrifice, whereof the Jewish or Pagan worshipper might eat? Christ, by his blood, had made propitiation for the sins of all men; but they, to whom this is revealed, must believe it, or they cannot be entitled to the benefit of it. This St. Paul plainly shews us, Rom. iii. 25; 'Him God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past.' But I should be obliged to

take too great a compass, should I quote all the passages in which eternal life is promised to faith in Christ's blood, and eternal death threatened to the contrary. I shall therefore pass to the other thing requisite to save a soul; namely, a lively faith in that which the word of God makes necessary to reform the soul, and render it an object of God's mercy.

This now is the new covenant, the sanctions whereof are all that remain to be handled. That faith in the new covenant is necessary to salvation, and, consequently, that the covenant itself is a fundamental, will not be disputed. But it cannot be a fundamental, if faith in those sanctions, which God hath expressly annexed to it, and which, in respect to our part in it, give it all its practical efficacy, is not also a fundamental. They are indeed so essential to it, that if we take them away, or do not as firmly believe in them, and stand to them, as to the rest of the covenant, it ceases to be a covenant at all; for, in that case, God's part is annulled, and we are left without an inducement to observe ours. Now, the sanctions are 'everlasting life,' promised to the keepers, and 'eternal death,' threatened to the transgressors, of this covenant; which is the very rule or law, whereby we are to live here, and be judged hereafter, when the reward shall be conferred, or the punishment inflicted, according to that rule.

The necessity of this article may be considered in a twofold light; first, as it arises from the testimony of Scripture; and, secondly, as it may be deduced from the nature of the thing. As to the Scriptures, eternal life, or the joys of heaven; and eternal death, or the torments of hell, are so plainly, and so abundantly, set forth therein, that to deny them is to contradict God himself; and to prove them, after all that was formerly said, by quotations again repeated from Scripture, is to wrong the audience I am speaking to. The application of them also to the observance, or transgression, of the covenant, is no less plain and clear, and therefore, if faith in the covenant is, by Scripture, made necessary to salvation, so is also faith in the sanctions of that covenant.

Besides, as faith in the redemption wrought by the death of Christ is necessary, it must be equally necessary to be-

lieve in eternal rewards and punishments; because otherwise we cannot have a right idea of that redemption, whereby we are so delivered from the one, and entitled to the other, that, unless we fall from the covenant, the promise of God, in regard to both, must have its accomplishment. Now, if the reward be really so glorious, and the punishment so grievous, as the Scripture represents them, we ought, of all things, most firmly to believe in them as such, that we may have a right sense of that gratitude, which is due for a mercy rendered doubly infinite, as well by the immensity of the benefit, as of his dignity and sufferings who procured it. That part of charity that hath God for its object, is the noble principle on which he chooses to finish the scriptural refinement of our nature, and on which the happiness of eternity must be founded. Let the work of reformation begin on what motives it will, it cannot be brought to perfection, till it ends in this: wherefore, nothing can concern either God's glory, or our happiness, more than a lively faith in the eternity of future retributions, which must excite in us a proportionable sense of God's goodness; this sense, an adequate love: and this love cannot fail, on the one side, to make all our services acceptable, nor, on the other, to afford us an eternal inlet to that enjoyment of God, which, keeping pace with our love, constitutes the happiness of heaven, and determines the height to which it shall rise.

The necessity of faith in the sanctions of the Christian covenant may also be deduced from the nature of the thing; that is, from the effect, which such motives may be naturally expected to have on the heart of man, and from the apparent impossibility of working a thorough reformation in that heart by motives less efficacious. Some men there may be, of so happy a make, as to stand in need of no other helps to reformation, than the abstracted love of virtue; and there may be also such a bird as the phœnix, and such a beast as the chimera; but it will be equally hard to persuade me, that any of the three ever existed. In all the men I know, or ever heard of, who were really reformed, self-love began the work of reformation. 'The substance of things hoped for' gave birth to the resolutions of one; and 'the fear of God was the beginning of wisdom,' in another. Our Maker did not give us our affections and passions, only to be so many

handles for the tempter to lay hold of, but with a gracious design to use them as springs and engines to work his own will in our hearts. Fear therefore, and desire, and love, have a natural relation to God and religion, as well as reason. If it is by this that our understandings receive conviction, it is by those that our hearts are either deterred from evil, or animated to the pursuit of good. Where is the use of passion or affection, if there is no rational principle to bound and direct them? And where is the use of reason, if there is nothing to prompt us to action, when reason represents it as fit and good? Our Maker, taking us as he made us, accommodates his religion to our whole nature, setting evidence before the understanding, and somewhat infinitely to be desired, or feared, before our affections. Were either omitted, the world, bad as it is, would be so much worse, that nothing but hell could be set in competition with it.

Libertines, who know nothing of reformation, because they never felt it, and, if we believe themselves, never needed it, may talk on about the beauty of virtue, of which they know and feel as little; but experience tells us, all this is nonsensical cant, and silly spite at religion, the only mother of real virtue, which, if we may judge by their actions, they hate, notwithstanding all they say of its beauty, as cordially as they do the wrinkles and hoary hairs of its antiquated parent. If they were not, on the contrary, deeply smitten with the beauty of vice, why is hell to be converted into a purgatory, for the purification of virtue's admirers? Or why is annihilation, that horror of the soul, next to hell, called in to the relief of those goodly philosophers, of whom, to the disgrace of common sense, and common honesty, not a few call themselves Christians, and would needs father their infernal notions about a universal purgatory, or annihilation, on the word of God, just as others do theirs about a plurality of gods? Pardon me; I should not say others, when I am really speaking of the same people. There is hardly a single man to be found, who is an Arian in regard to the Trinity, that is not either a Platonist, or an Atheist, in regard to a future state. These men have no objections to the eternity of rewards. Those they will vouchsafe to receive; because they please. But the eternity of punishments is not to be digested; because it is just as irksome, as all their vices are

sweet and soothing. I know they pretend other reasons; but they are so purely deistical, that we shall defer our answer, till these gentlemen find it convenient to throw off the mask of Christianity, and cease to talk with respect of the Scriptures.

One thing more, however, I will observe concerning these men, and then have done. It is their constant practice to declaim against the creeds so long used in the church; not, say they, because we dislike the principles contained in those creeds, but because none but God ought to give a creed. Their conversations, however, and writings, sufficiently shew, they have other reasons, not so fit to own; and that they actually disbelieve the doctrines of the Trinity, the satisfaction, &c. as set forth in our creeds. To lessen the stress laid on these doctrines, as articles of faith necessary to salvation, they speak very slightly of faith itself, and nonsensically confound it with works; as if the principle on which our actions are done, and those actions were the same thing. They also cry up morality, and good works, as the only fundamental required by the word of God; and make it a matter of little consequence whether those works are performed on scriptural principles, or not. Nay, for the most part, they actually discard the whole system of Christian morality, as founded on rewards and punishments; and adopt the morality of the Deists, which consists in what they call disinterested virtue. Thus those men, who will allow of no creed but the Bible, nor of any religious essential, but morality, treat the morality of the Bible with the utmost contempt, as altogether mercenary and slavish. Notwithstanding this, they take it very ill to be called Deists, or to have it said, they are not good Christians; although they are perpetually plying us on this head with those arguments, wherewith the Deists attack Christianity in their writings.

Having said enough to prove the doctrines of the Trinity, of the satisfaction made by the death of Christ for our sins, and of the eternity of future sanctions, fundamentals of the Christian faith, give me leave now to conclude this Discourse with a supposition, by way of recapitulation, that all the doctrines I have been labouring to establish in these Discourses, are false and erroneous, in order to see what

would follow from the contrary, which in that case must be true.

In the first place, On this supposition, there may be any number whatsoever of new gods appointed, provided they do not carry the names of Jupiter, Baal, Osiris, Fo, &c. which would make heathens of us all again. It is likewise to be observed, that the very same Being, in respect to the self-same nature, may be both a creature and a God; so that we may rank him both with the true God, and ourselves; and that we may give him every name, and every attribute, of the true God, but supremacy; which is as much as to say, that all God's attributes, but that one, are applicable to creatures, as well as to him; and that he hath no proper name, by which he may be distinguished from the works of creation. In consequence of this, we may worship and pray to creatures, whenever we take it into our heads to think, he hath set them over us for gods. Of this sort are Christ and the Holy Ghost, of whom it is not material to our faith, whether they came earlier or later into being, since they are but creatures; yet, creatures as they are, they must be worshipped and honoured as the Creator; for they act by his authority, which whosoever does, ought to have divine worship paid him, according to the station he is placed in. Although some think there are, at present, but three gods; yet it is safer to say, there are a great many more; because angels, kings, and other great men, are called gods in the same sense, but in a lower degree of divinity, with Christ and the Holy Ghost. To conclude, we must understand the first commandment in this sense, 'Thou shalt have some other gods beside me;' and the expression in Isaiah, 'There is no other God beside me; I know not any;' in this sense, 'There are other gods beside me; I know many;' and so in all cases of the like nature. Every one may see how much more natural this way of interpretation is, than the other too literal method. And so much for the unity of the Trinity.

In the second place, Either the nature of Adam was, from the beginning, as corrupt as ours is now, or ours is as perfect as his was at first; for we are as able to keep the whole law of God as he was; from whence it necessarily follows, that God made man just as he is, and that the entail of corrup-

tion and guilt are wholly chimerical. We need no grace, no Spirit of God, to help our infirmities, being able of ourselves to help ourselves; and able to merit all the glories of heaven by our own righteousness; at least, if we cannot do altogether so much, we need no one to do it for us, nor any sacrifice or atonement to satisfy for our sins. No man can answer, or suffer, for another: justice will not punish the innocent for the guilty, nor give peace to the guilty for the sake of the innocent. We do not believe that the Father hath made peace for us through the blood of his Son's cross, nor thereby reconciled all things to himself. What occasion for this, since we were not born in sin, nor the children of wrath; and since, if we were alienated, and enemies, it is only by our own actual wicked works, which we may reform whenever we please, without the aid either of preventing or assisting grace? Wherefore, we renounce all claims on the death and merits of Christ; and as we work, so we desire, that the reward may be reckoned, not of grace, but of debt; for nothing can be more contrary to reason than this, that because a man believes there is one who justifies the ungodly, that man therefore shall have his belief counted to him for virtue and goodness, although he works not himself. So much for redemption and grace.

In the third place, We believe there is a heaven, and we believe there may be a hell, but that the wicked shall be tormented in the latter to all eternity, we utterly deny. We also deny the locality of this punishment; insisting that it is in no particular place, nor inflicted by real fire. We interpret metaphorically all the expressions relating to it in Scripture; particularly, we believe, the word 'everlasting,' when applied to it, should be interpreted by the word 'tedious,' or 'of long continuance;' for notwithstanding that shocking epithet, we are firmly persuaded, the future punishment will be only temporary. But, be these rewards and punishments what they will, we do not admit them as sanctions of our morality, lest they should destroy the very essence of virtue, and render us, in all we do, slavish and mercenary. Wherefore we think of them as seldom, and as slightly, as we can; and never make the one an hinderance to any thing we have a mind to do, nor the other a motive to any thing we think fit to be done. The reasons of our

actions are drawn only from the fitnesses of things; and the motives, from the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice. So much for the sanctions.

In the last place, We look on the subject-matter of these doctrines as of too little importance to make either them, or their contraries, fundamental articles of faith. We think it of no great consequence to the salvation of any man, which way he thinks on these points, provided he is sincere; that is, provided he is really of his own opinion; for we do not believe the arbitrary governors of churches have any right to know his real sentiments, by his answers, his subscriptions, his declarations, with whatsoever farcical solemnities they may endeavour to pump out the secrets of his heart. We have two creeds, a short and a long one. The short one is this; Christ is the Messiah. This we believe to be fundamental; but will not be held to any consequences, excepting such as we draw ourselves. And the long one is the Bible whereof we will admit of no interpretations of other mens devising, having a peculiar method of our own, which we find answers better than any other hitherto found out. But although we differ widely with the generality of Christians about the object of worship, the unity of God, the Trinity, the necessary means of salvation, and the like speculative points; yet we love all men, we anathematize none, we endeavour to lead moral lives; and are ready, as often as we think it may be turned to good account, either to ourselves or others, to hold communion with Christians of all denominations.

Such is the system set up against that I have been labouring to defend, when openly expressed, without the shuffle of ambiguous words, and double meanings. And such is the effect, in perverse, and overweening men, of holding the Scriptures, to be the word of God, and yet denying the doctrines, that are most plainly, and most copiously, insisted on, in those Scriptures. Whether ever there hath appeared, in any age of the world, a system of any kind so big with blasphemy and absurdity, is hard to say. This is the body of divinity preferred to the Athanasian creed, as more intelligible, more consistent, and more scriptural. This is the scheme of ethics preferred to that of Christianity, which terminates in the judgment of the great day.

The word of God, however, vouches for the one, and the vain philosophy of men would advance the other. It is our business to choose which we would adhere to.

Although there should be no necessity for believing, either in what I have been labouring to prove fundamental, or in the contrary; yet it must be necessary, at least, to know, whether such belief is necessary or not. The subject does not seem to be of so little consequence, as not to merit even this preliminary attention. Can it be less than absolutely necessary to salvation, that we should know whom we are to worship, and by what means we are to be saved? The Holy Ghost tells us, over and over again, 'That we are to worship God, the one only eternal God, alone; that we are justified by faith; and that the just shall live by his faith.' If we resolve to be concluded by the word of God, we must leave all our own opinions, prejudices, and preconceptions, behind us, that our faculties may have nothing else to do, but to receive the dictates of divine wisdom, which, in that case, we shall easily apprehend, and clearly understand. Where God hath been pleased to be silent, it becomes us to be dumb. So far as he hath vouchsafed to reveal himself, it is our duty, our highest wisdom, to believe, and to adore; not choosing to be 'of them, who draw back unto perdition, but of them who believe, to the saving of the soul;' not choosing, that 'our faith should stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God;' not choosing 'that wisdom of the wise, which God will destroy; nor that understanding of the prudent, which he will bring to nothing;' because 'it lieth against the truth;' because 'it descendeth not from above; but is earthly, sensual, devilish;' but choosing 'that wisdom which is' really 'from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy;' that 'sound wisdom which the Lord layeth up for the righteous, which is with the lowly, who ceaseth from his own wisdom,' and like 'Solomon, asketh of God that wisdom which is better than rubies, so that all things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it.' To conclude, we can in nothing so safely consult our own happiness, as in avoiding the example of 'that man,' who, 'through desire, or vain curiosity, having sepa-

rated himself from the true teacher' of his church, 'vainly seeketh, and impertinently intermeddleth with, all wisdom,' though ever so foreign to his purpose, though ever so high above his reach; Prov. xviii. 1. Nor can we, after renouncing 'the wisdom of the world,' and emptying our understandings of vain refinements, do any thing so pleasing to God, or so highly beneficial to ourselves, as to 'let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom;' Coloss. iii. 16.

But whereas the true wisdom or religion is thy gift, O God, alone; so, in a deep sense of our own blindness and folly, we most humbly beseech thee, of thy infinite goodness, to bestow on us thy Spirit, 'that we may know the holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus;' to whom, in the unity of the ever-blessed Trinity, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE XIII.

A TEST NECESSARY BEFORE ADMISSION INTO THE MINISTRY.

2 Tim. i. 13, 14

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.

That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us.

Although there is sufficient reason to doubt whether what we call the Apostles' Creed was the form of sound words here spoken of, or not; yet there is no room to question the general persuasion, that it was some such form, or brief summary of articles, necessary to the belief and practice of the church. That the apostle did not mean the instructions at large which he gave to Timothy, is plain from the word in the original, rendered by form, which properly signifies the sketch or outlines of a picture. This form he charges his favourite disciple to 'hold fast in a firm faith,' as to *himself*, and in love or charity towards others, who are

united to him in Christ Jesus; that, by the first, he might ensure the salvation of a true believer to his own soul; and, by the latter, be moved to propagate the same saving faith, and no other, among the people committed to his care. The matter of this form he calls a good or excellent deposit, requiring Timothy to keep, or, as it is in the original, to 'guard it safely,' that is, to preserve it pure and entire, 'by the grace of the Holy Ghost,' which alone can enable us 'to stand fast in the faith,' in that faith which is 'not of ourselves, but the gift of God.'

Two things merit our observation in regard to this faith; its unity, and its necessity. As to the first, the Holy Spirit assures us, that, as there is 'but one God, and one Lord, so there is likewise but one faith;' Eph. iv; and, in the same chapter tells us, 'God gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, for the edification of Christ's body,' or church, 'that we may all come,' by the sound and uniform instructions of those teachers, 'to the unity of the faith.' And, as to the necessity of this one only faith, it is set forth to us in the strongest terms: 'Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin,' Rom. xiv. 'Without faith it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;' Heb. xi. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;' Rom. v. 1. Our Saviour saith, John iii. 18, 'He that believeth on him, is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the only-begotten Son of God.'

As, then, there is but one faith, and that faith so necessary; and since the Scriptures were given us by God purely to instruct us in the matter of that faith, and to convince us of its truth; we cannot, without blaspheming the wisdom and goodness of God, suppose this faith, either obscurely or imperfectly declared to us in those Scriptures; for, if it were, how could his Spirit, taking occasion from differences that arose on subjects of far less consequence, 1 Cor. i. 11, 12. than such as related to the faith, exhort us to uniformity in all things; and, ver. 10, so earnestly 'beseech us, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we should all speak the same thing; that there should be no divisions among

us; but that we should be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and the same judgment?' It is in regard to faith especially, perhaps only, that revelation is so often called 'light, the great, the marvellous light, the day,' and 'the dayspring.'

This being the case, it may seem astonishing, that such infinite diversities and oppositions should have risen among Christians about the articles of faith, about their number, their meaning, their necessity; whether we are to be justified by the righteousness of Christ, or by our own; whether the torments of hell will be eternal, or temporary; whether we may worship and pray to any being but God; whether there is only one God, or three, &c. Who, that ever looked into the word of God with open eyes, could conceive it possible for the readers and believers of that word to be in doubt about such things?

The odium of this wonder might, with some colour of justice, be thrown on the Scriptures, had not men differed as widely, according to their prejudices and passions, about other branches of knowledge sufficiently plain. There is nothing so plain in the whole circle of science, as to have been always undisputed. Neither is there any thing so remote from right reason, as not, at one time or another, to have been the favourite opinion of some uncouth head, or even of some party. If any one should take the pains to write, with freedom and impartiality, a dogmatical history, it would be no easy matter to distinguish it from a history of Bedlam. Its true character would be a vast mass of subtle reasonings, screwed and distorted, to support a proportionable variety of wild, whimsical, or wicked notions. To say nothing of logics, physics, metaphysics, &c. is it possible for the lodgers in Moorfields to think more differently, that is, in effect, more wildly, than the learned in morality and politics have both thought and written in those practical sciences wherein mankind are most concerned, and, of consequence, one should imagine, ought to be most clear and determinate? As to religious matters, which are often high and spiritual, and, in some measure, incomprehensible in their very nature, that they should, although ever so clearly revealed, afford room for difference and dispute among mankind, who are more tempted to deviate from reason in this

than in any other kind of knowledge, is a thing not much to be wondered at, if we consider it as the growth of minds so naturally various in their judgments, and so apt to be opinionated in what springs from within themselves; although, indeed, nothing can be more unaccountable in men who make, or pretend to make, the plain word of God the only rule of their faith. As men, it may well be expected of us, that we should differ, especially about remote and less necessary points of theology; but whosoever candidly reads the Scriptures, must be amazed at our differing, as Christians, at least concerning the very fundamentals of our religion. Be this, however, as it will, surely these diversities of opinions, and the contentions arising from thence, are an evil, which, of all others, the sober and pious part of the world should most earnestly desire to see cured.

And therefore, we may venture to say, that, of all the extravagances, in relation to religion, which the wrong heads, and of all the fallacies, which the deceitful hearts, of the present age, so fertile in both, have engendered, none seems so wild in itself, nor so dangerous in its consequences, as the now prevailing notion of many, who represent the care taken by each Christian church to provide for the choice of teachers conformable to herself in principles, as the greatest bar to truth, the most grievous encroachment on the natural liberty of mankind, and, therefore, as a thing wholly unlawful in itself. This is the general cry of all who have only a smattering either of knowledge or religion; and we can easily see what are the motives that serve them instead of reasons. They are miserably hampered with principles opposite to those of the church, and, at the same time, with no small longings after her preferments. Straitened, therefore, as they are, between conscience on the one hand, and the love of lucre on the other; and finding it difficult, on account of the first, to squeeze through the present subscriptions and declarations to the latter; they are forced to have recourse to this artful plea, in hopes thereby to throw open the doors of the church, and procure an indiscriminate admission for all. But from how many different quarters this plea is pushed, is not easy to say. This, however, is certain, were it allowed to be valid, and reduced to practice by a total abolition of all articles, creeds, declarations, &c.

the Arian, the Socinian, the Papist, the Mahometan, would all equally find their account in it, and therefore have equal reason to urge it for the present turn; though the world knows there is not one denomination of them that would grant what they now demand, could they once get the church to themselves. Indeed they ought not; for with what conscience could a Popish church admit such men for teachers as they esteem heretics? Or how could an Arian or a Socinian church admit into the ministry a set of men, who, they are sensible, would teach the people the co-equality of the three Persons in the Trinity, which they regard as a most pernicious doctrine? Sure I am, if they did, they must be very unfaithful to the most awful trust that ever was reposed in man.

It will not, I hope, be denied, that some care ought to be taken by those who have any authority (howsoever they come by it) in any church, that the members of that church be taught Christianity, and not any other religion or superstition, such as Mahometism, Manicheism, Paganism, &c. If they do not take this care, how can they answer for the trust they conceive to be reposed in them, on the strength of which they meddle with the affairs of religion?

But they can in no sort shew themselves thus careful, without a strict inquiry into the principles, the morals, the capacities, and the knowledge, of such as they permit and appoint to be teachers of the people. If there is no inquiry into their principles, the people may have instructors who shall teach them to trust in Mahomet, or worship the devil. If there is no inquiry into their morals, the sheep may have goats and wolves for pastors. If there is no inquiry into their capacity and knowledge, the blind must be led by the blind; or the ignorant must be set up to teach those who have more understanding than themselves; which can tend to nothing but the utter contempt of the ministry, and, through that, of religion.

If, then, they who are already in authority may, or rather ought, thus to inquire, it follows, that they ought by the most effectual methods they can think of, to sound the capacities of such as sue for the ministry, to examine their skill in Scripture, to demand ample certificates of their good behaviour; and, as no man is morally good but on principle,

nor fit to be the guide of others, if he hath not somewhat to guide himself, they ought, above all things, to ask the candidates what their principles are; and to receive their answers, with the most solemn protestations of sincerity, either in the words of the candidates themselves, or by forms prepared and authorized in the church for that purpose, or by both; for it is impossible to be too careful in an affair of this consequence. But, as it is perfectly equal to the honest candidate, whether he discovers his religious sentiments in the words of the church, or his own; and as there is less danger of equivocal terms in a form warily prepared by the church; so the use of such forms is chiefly to be depended on. And, to answer the important end proposed by them, they cannot be too full, too express, too explicit; or, in case of prevarication, too severely damnatory. If, on the application of these means, the present governors of the church should judge the candidates to be, either in principle or practice, no Christians, I hope I may be allowed to say, they ought to reject them.

Now, although these governors should be ever so really heterodox in themselves, yet, as they think their principles right, they cannot judge the candidates to be Christians, if they find their sentiments essentially opposite to their own; or, even if they find them to be indifferent to what they take to be essential, they cannot think them fit instructors for the people. The Athanasian cannot, as an honest man, admit the Arian, nor the Arian the Athanasian; the Protestant cannot, without doing violence to his conscience, admit the Papist; nor the Papist, without the like violence, ordain the Protestant, any more than he could the Mahometan, knowing him to be such. Now it is no objection to this method, that the candidate, after all, may have prevaricated, because the governors of the church are not obliged to search the heart; but they are certainly obliged to do, in this behalf, the best they can; and when they have done it, but not till then, they have discharged their consciences in the sight of God.

That it is the indispensable duty of church-governors, especially in times like these, to take this method, is so very obvious to common sense, that, I own, my being particular on this subject might give this Discourse an air of puerility,

were not all I have said disputed by a numerous party among us, and that so gravely, as to satisfy the unwary they are in good earnest.

But if I stand in need of an apology to men of reason, in thus taking up their time by the proof of positions so indisputable; how shall I excuse myself to the honest part of my audience for the descant I am going to give on the necessity of sincerity in those who subscribe, and solemnly declare for, such forms as I have been recommending? Surely, you will say, it must be as needless to expatiate on such a point, as to prove, that sacrilege or perjury is a crime. Is it possible for the most abandoned of mankind to prevaricate, on so solemn an occasion, with the governors of the church, with the all-seeing God, even while the holy mysteries are in view? How am I overwhelmed with shame and sorrow, when I tell you, that numbers have not only the baseness of soul thus to prevaricate, but even the impudence of face to defend it when it is done! O tell it not, my brethren, at Edinburgh, publish it not in the streets of Rome; lest the disciples of Knox rejoice, lest the bigots of Hildebrand triumph!

They say, our articles and creeds do not set forth the doctrines of the Trinity, of the satisfaction of eternal punishments, &c. in terms so strict, but that he who believes the contrary may honestly subscribe them all. They say, a man may solemnly declare before God his unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained in the book of Common Prayer; may solemnly undertake, when he is ordained, to teach its doctrines, and no other; may solemnly repeat its prayers, though he utterly disbelieves the doctrines just now mentioned, and teaches the very reverse; and yet —amazing! may be an—honest man; for no other reason, that I can find, but because, by so doing, he may acquire a place wherein to make his abilities useful, and a power to do good, that is, to disabuse the people in relation to these very doctrines, thus solemnly assented to. However, as such men cannot help looking on this practice as a sort of indecorum, they are ever scheming the repeal of these subscriptions and declarations. I may say on this, as Tertullian did on a different occasion: "How miserably is the conduct of these men confounded, and rendered inconsistent with

itself, by necessity!" They subscribe the articles as orthodox, and solicit the repeal of them as unsound. They publicly declare for them as consonant to Scripture, and privately undermine them as contrary thereunto. And this they do, that they may have it in their power to serve the God of truth in his vineyard, by pruning away those branches, as mere excrescences, which they promised to support with all their skill. Are we, in such a service, 'to do evil, that good may come of it? God forbid.' Let those who defend the practice of subscribing forms directly repugnant to their real sentiments, on the pretence of thereby acquiring an opportunity to insinuate sounder principles than those contained in the forms, by the aid of double meanings supposed in the forms, or of secret reservations conceived in their own minds, consider seriously, how such a scheme, with its excuse, would have sounded in the ears of our blessed Saviour. Suppose one of his disciples, Judas, for instance, none of the rest being capable of the thing, should have thus addressed him:

"O divine Master, I have with concern observed, that mankind are averse to the truths of thy holy religion, when openly and nakedly proposed; and still more unwilling to receive a system of morality so pure and severe, if it is not recommended to them by the appearance of somewhat more indulgent. They will not, I foresee, be persuaded to quit their pleasing prepossessions, for a set of principles that are as disagreeable as they are new to them. Wilt thou, therefore, permit me to declare myself a worshipper of the heathen gods, that I may, by this expedient, insinuate myself into the priesthood of Baal or Jupiter, and, in that situation, artfully pass thy religion and worship on the people, under the mask of their own? In taking this course, I intend to graft on the minds of the Pagans such unsuspected principles, in the disguise of other philosophical opinions which they favour, and by the assistance of ambiguous terms, as may serve for the seeds of truth, and be afterward so effectually urged, as to procure a total admission of our religion. They will not receive the first principles of a system they are so averse to, while they are aware of the tendency; but if these principles are once admitted, which, by prudently concealing the consequences, they may; we can, at our leisure, teach

them to draw the conclusion, and hold them to it, till they are wholly ours."

Let the Socinian and Arian subscribers of our articles consider how Christ would have received such a proposal. And let them not presume to vindicate themselves by saying, their conduct is different from that in the supposition. That in the supposition, which would have stirred the indignation of Christ, is the base profession of Paganism, and the actual worship of its gods, against the conviction of him who was to do it, in order to insinuate an ingenuous system of truths, and promote the credit of a Master who could not but disdain such a service. Now the same idolatrous disingenuity, with a notable aggravation, is found in the conduct of an Arian or Socinian, who subscribes our articles, declares for our creeds, and repeats the liturgy as a solemn act of worship to Christ and the Holy Ghost, whom he believes to be creatures. Is he not as truly an idolater, or at least a prevaricator, as Judas could have been in the first case? Nay, does he not act rather a viler part; since there was no form of heathen principles so strict and explicit as the Athanasian creed, tendered to the candidates for the Pagan priesthood?

Dr. Clarke, who, although a Semi-arian, was, by virtue of the subscriptions and declarations we are speaking of, possessed of the rectory of St. James's, to apologize in this behalf for himself, and others alike circumstanced, hath in a most elaborate work, endeavoured to reconcile his principles, first with the holy Scriptures, and then with the liturgy, and even the Nicene and Athanasian creeds. If he hath succeeded in this attempt to the satisfaction of his admirers, they need not, surely, wish for the abolition of these creeds. But I will venture to say, it is as easy to accommodate the first article of either to Atheism or Polytheism, as the subsequent ones to Socinianism, Arianism, or Semi-arianism. Otherwise the framers of these forms were certainly the most unhappy of all men in expressing themselves. They intended, I believe, to be very precise in their terms, very strong and close in their propositions, and thereby to anathematize the Arian opinion among others. The abettors of those opinions thought so, and complained. But behold the strange mistake of both! Those creeds either maintain the contrary principles agitated at the councils of Nice and Constanti-

nople, or the Arian, Semi-arian, and Macedonian, only; anathematizing that which was called orthodox, and held by those who drew them up. Of all the works the world hath ever seen, this is the most impudent and disingenuous, and shews the greatest contempt for the understanding of its readers.

Does Christianity teach us honesty and sincerity? And shall we Christians, thus taught, use nothing but jugglery and deceit in speaking to one another, or in writing to the world, about Christ and Christianity? Nay, shall we use this deceit even in our solemn professions to the church, even in our devout addresses to God? If Christianity could countenance such a conduct as this, I should renounce it with as much horror as hell itself. If the God of truth, angry at 'the deceivableness of unrighteousness that is in us,' as St. Paul expresses it, hath not for this cause, 'sent us strong delusion, that we should believe a lie,' he will blast the deceitful practices of these men. If 'the god of this world' hath not been permitted 'to blind our minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto us,' we shall, with just indignation, detect and avoid the snares of these deceivers. Indeed it is happy for the people, that the teachers of lies, afraid of offending the orthodox ears of their hearers, are forced to use such expressions as may bear a good as well as an ill sense, insomuch that the ignorant are in little danger of being perverted by their discourses. The ancient Arians, from whom the modern have copied their dissimulation as well as heresy, were obliged, as Waterland observes, even in the zenith of their power, to follow the same method; whereby it came to pass, that the people escaped the infection which had seized almost the whole body of the clergy. The poison, which was wrapped up in a word of double meaning, evaporated in the air between the mouth of the speaker and the ear of the hearer. St. Hilary observed the same thing. "By the fraud," saith he, "wherewith this impious practice is carried on, it hath happened, that the people of Christ do not perish under the priests of antichrist, while they take that to be the faith of their teachers which their words express. They hear Christ called God by their clergy, and they believe him to be what he is called. They hear him styled 'the Son of

God;' and they believe the truth of his divinity to be contained in his divine nativity. They hear, 'he was before all time;' and this they take to be the same as if he were called eternal. The ears of the people are more holy than the hearts of their teachers." Such was the dissimulation of the Arians, when they were troubled with no forms but of their own composure. The present Arians and Socinians go a great deal farther. They step into the preferments of the church by solemnly subscribing, and declaring for, creeds, that, in the strongest terms, anathematize their principles; and, after all, they are not only tolerated by the times, but caressed and promoted by those who have discernment enough to see into their disingenuity. How truly may God say of us, as he did of the Jews in the time of Jeremiah! 'A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people,' my once favoured people, 'love to have it so.'

But, horrible and wonderful as this practice must seem to an honest mind, it is, as I have already observed, defended both in conversation, and through the press. Yet, that they who make the defence, are by no means satisfied with the validity of it themselves, is manifest from their every day publishing books and pamphlets against the expediency of the subscriptions and declarations mentioned; which shew, that their consciences, though large enough to swallow them, are not strong enough to digest them. Give me leave to make some observations on a few of their most distinguished objections.

First, They say these subscriptions bear too hard on Christian liberty, which gives every man a right to think and judge for himself; whereas the subscriptions tend either to deprive them of their natural right to the ecclesiastical emoluments of their country, or to deprive the church of their services.

I shall readily grant, that Christian liberty gives a right, nay, requires us, to think for ourselves, but not for others, because this would be a contradiction in terms. Now, he who desires the ministry, takes upon him, in some measure, to think for the ignorant, whom he would instruct. If he does not take himself to be more knowing than they, why

does he desire to be their teacher? He may say, indeed, he does not propose to give them any documents on his own authority, but on that of Scripture. He knows, however, that they will, they must, take his word for a great part of what he shall deliver to them as scriptural. He again, who desires the ministry, but peremptorily objects to the subscriptions that stand in his way to it, and would remove them if he could, pretends to think for the governors of the church, who require them, because they judge them expedient; that is, he demands a liberty from men in authority, which he, who hath none, will not give them. They think they are in conscience bound to preserve the people from the infection of his principles; for which reason they look on it as their duty to exclude him from the ministry; and he would force them to act the contrary part, if he could persuade the legislature to help him. Is this allowing the liberty he pleads for? As to the benefit the church might receive from his abilities and services, thinking for himself will not do in respect to that, whereof others must unavoidably be judges. And as to the profits he might receive from the church, thinking for himself, where the motive is apt to be so unallowably selfish, is still more unreasonable and dangerous than in the former case. The Scripture, it is true, does not any where exclude him by name from a rich benefice? but it stigmatizes those, 'who, for filthy lucre, make merchandise of men's souls,' in such a manner, as leaves it not in the power of church governors to turn the house of God into a shop, or market, for a man who shews himself to be but a money-changer, by his throwing this lucrative argument into his plea.

These men object also, That our subscriptions are productive of divisions, and uncharitable disturbances; and that, instead of procuring peace by means of uniformity, they only serve to widen the breaches that are already made; to open new ones; and to inflame the minds of men on such religious differences, as, otherwise, would occasion no animosities in the church.

What! no animosities? Is not the controversy about the Trinity, or the pope's infallibility, of moment enough to warm us a little, unless the wealth of the church be added, as the only bone worth contending for? With what face can

a man declare it of himself, that his avarice is so much apter to give him warmths, than his zeal for the propagation of necessary Christian truths? I cannot do the objectors, even on their own testimony, so great injustice, as to imagine them perfectly indifferent in these important points, when worldly profits are not annexed. Were all subscriptions laid aside, and a free admission given to Papists, Arians, Socinians, Quakers, Moravians, &c. would it procure us peace and charity? Perhaps, for a time, it might give us the peace of men who are asleep or dead; but sure I am, it would not be long ere we should be totally corrupted both in principle and practice, and all together by the ears about controversies of as little moment as those trifles that occasion the scuffles of our children. Whatever the state may do with religion, we may presume it will never distribute its places of trust and power among sects thus religiously animated, or capable of being animated, against one another. A religious sect, converted by the possession of civil power into a political faction, cannot but give the judicious a hopeful prospect of peace!

It is farther objected also, That, whereas uniformity is the end proposed by our subscriptions, it is an end, which, as Christians, we ought not to be solicitous about, because God does not approve of it, delighting rather in variety, and with equal complacency receiving the worship of his creatures, howsoever diversified over the face of the whole earth.

This objection is false in all its parts. Our church does not propose to convert men, by her articles, to her principles. Nor does she aim, by her subscriptions, any otherwise at uniformity, than that her communion may be granted only to such as think with her in essentials. She shuts out no man from her ministry, purely because he differs with her in what she takes to be essential; but because, if she should admit him, she knows he will propagate such opinions among the people under her care, as she firmly believes to be pernicious and damnable. That she is in the right so to do, hath been sufficiently proved already; although, I must confess, no point in the world stands less in need of a proof.

But I hope, if she in her homilies, and her divines in their private writings, have endeavoured, by justifying her

doctrines, to bring the whole nation to conformity with her, this will not be imputed to her as a crime, especially by those who labour to draw all mankind into their own opinions, though ever so far detached from a probability of establishment, or, I may say, from even a shew of reason and Scripture. The very objectors, who tell us (I know not who revealed it to them), that God is best pleased with variety of religions, use their utmost endeavours to make the whole world Arian or Socinian; which must be highly wicked in them, since it is their principle, that God would rather have entire nations to worship idols and devils, as they have done, and do to this day. If God had never commanded us to 'be all of one mind, to think and speak the same thing,' we ought to have known it to be his will, because as in any particular point, truth is one, and error various, or rather infinite; and as God cannot but love the truth, and hate the contrary; so, in respect to religious matters especially, wherein he himself is our teacher, he must be pleased to see us embrace the truth, and displeased with all our avoidable errors. It is true, he permits error; and so he does sin. But we ought no more to infer his approbation, from his permission, of the one, than of the other. Besides, if error be a main cause, or rather, strictly speaking, the only cause, of sin, he must abhor the cause in the same proportion as he detests the effect.

But some of our wise objectors, having found out the necessity of subscriptions under some regulation or other; and disliking our method, for no better reason, as you will probably perceive just now, than because it is ours, and not their own; propose two other kinds of subscriptions, as vastly more convenient and adviseable.

The first is, That every candidate for holy orders be obliged to give in a schedule or summary of his principles drawn up in his own words; by which, say they, the slavery of saying after others, whatever they think fit to dictate, will be avoided, and his sentiments as thoroughly known.

The proposing this expedient, and actually reducing it to practice, as in many places is done, hath somewhat in it either very knavish, or very foolish. When it is practised by men of sense, as preferable to our method, it gives shrewd cause of suspicion, that they have no other end in

it, but to give the candidate an opportunity of concealing his real sentiments on some important points of controversy, wherein his silence or ambiguity is taken for a sufficient token, that his principles are more conformable to the minds of the examiners, than to those of Christians in general.

But when it is preferred to our method, without any such by-end as this, it is the effect of mere prejudice, and altogether foolish. Men of any understanding cannot but know, that there is no difference between the two methods, unless purely in the point of convenience, which is plainly on the side of ours, when both the examiners and the candidate have honestly the same intention, they to know his real sentiments, and he to declare them freely. If a form is to be subscribed at all, what is the use of it? Is it not that the ordainers may find out, as far as they can trust the solemn declarations of a man suing for holy orders, what are his real principles, in order, if they approve of them, to admit him, or if they find them unsound, that is, essentially contrary to their own, to reject him? If this is the end, surely there can be no difference between their tendering him such a form, and his tendering one to them, excepting that the one may be more full and express than the other. Since some confession is on this occasion to be made and subscribed, will the examiners, or ought they to ordain him, till his form of confession comes up in sum and substance to that which they would propose to him, were they desirous to know his mind? And, if they will not, where is the sense of choosing his form, rather than one of their own, or of that church in which their consciences lead them to communicate? His privilege of expressing himself by his own words, a thing extolled by these men, as if it were the only barrier of Christian liberty, will be found to be a very frivolous privilege indeed; since, do what he will, he must so express himself, as to set forth precisely their meaning, or, otherwise, the end of forms and subscriptions is wholly frustrated. If they do not perceive his meaning by his words, or do not like it, they must send him away to mend it; and they can never think it sufficiently mended, till it becomes, to all intents and purposes, their form rather than his. All this while, how shall he know what are the heads

they deem necessary for him to declare himself on, and what kind of declaration they would approve, if they do not tell him? But, if they do tell him, had they not as good tell it him by some creed, or formula of confession, well considered and prepared beforehand? What, in the name of common sense, will either party lose or gain by the difference?

The other expedient, or subscription, proposed by our worthy opponents, hath, at first, more appearance, than the former, of piety and reason; although, when it is well considered, it will deserve, from a sound judge, the same censure of disingenuity or folly. They say, as our faith depends on Scripture only, we ought to use no other form, for the purpose in hand, but such as is conceived in the very words of Scripture, without the least mixture, though it were merely for connexion, of human words or terms. In this case, they are willing to let the examiners make the extracts themselves. Or, to mend their scheme, they think it best to subscribe the Bible at large, as the word of God. Thus, say they, we shall be sure we do right, because we make use of a confession of faith drawn up by God himself, and stick precisely to his own words.

Is it words, then, only, which we are to be so careful about in our subscriptions, and not meanings? Does that word of God, whereof Christ says, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away,' consist in the dead letter, than which nothing can be more perishable, and not in the truth and spirit intimated to us under that letter? If it lies in the letter only, Papists, Arians, Socinians, Manichees, &c. are all of one mind; for they are all ready to subscribe to the letter, all ready to recognise the book as the word of God, and to subscribe it as such. But, if it is the sense of this holy book which we mean, when we call it God's word, we must, in subscribing it, tell what the sense of it is, or we do nothing. And yet, if we do this, we shall, even in points acknowledged to be fundamental by all, have I know not how many Bibles as opposite in their meanings as they are uniform in their words. The Papist and the Socinian shall communicate together, and peace shall be restored; but it must be at the expense of truth. If the Bible in the original languages is to be subscribed, it is ma-

nifest, that not one in ten of the candidates can subscribe the far greater part of it, any otherwise than as blank paper, or as paper filled with unmeaning words. But, if a translation may be used for this purpose, then it may be asked, Whose translation? A Popish or a Protestant translation? The proposers of this scheme are not aware, that it is as dangerous to translate the Scriptures for vulgar use, as for subscription; and that, if we do translate them, we must depart from God's words, and dress up in our own such meanings as we have collected, or rather sometimes extorted, from his. This considered, is it not evident, that all the subscribers of a translation will set their hands, not to one Bible, but each of them to a Bible of his own? As the devil quoted Scripture against Christ, so numbers quote it every day against truth, against the very truths of Scripture, nay, even against its own authority and divinity. That they quote it absurdly, and wrest it wickedly, is true: but who shall judge them in this? None but God, who knows he hath made it sufficiently intelligible to answer his gracious ends in giving it to us; and who clearly sees in the hearts of men those abominable biasses, and detestable passions, through which they view it all distorted and confounded. Now, although the governors of no church can justly pretend to the gift of infallible interpretation; yet, as it is acknowledged by the objection, that they ought, by some means or other, to ask the candidates for holy orders what are their religious principles; as the candidates must, some way or other, return a satisfactory answer, before the askers can be justified in ordaining them; and as, in fact, subscribing the Bible will by no means bring them to the necessary end proposed; this new scheme of subscription must be laid aside, as wholly useless.

Perhaps, had I stayed a few years, I might have saved myself the trouble of stating and answering this proposal for subscribing the Bible; because, it is probable, they who offer it, will in a little time give it up. They have generally gone on, for fifty years past, laying aside confessions, abolishing creeds, and inveighing against all human composures, as tests of orthodoxy; and now, to serve a turn, they insist on the Bible as the only test. But, whereas they already begin to deny the divine inspiration of the Bible in

part, and can by no means settle what parts were given by the Spirit, and what by the scriptural writers, purely as the dictates of their own minds; the word of God itself must soon lose its credit with these enemies to uninspired tests. And this is more probable, since they have long ago reduced the religion contained in it to almost nothing; taking such liberties, in order thereunto, in explaining it, as no just critic would allow himself or others to take with the compositions of the meanest writers. They whiffle away the divinity of Christ and the Holy Ghost, which the Scriptures represent in the strongest terms, in shameless equivocations. They deny the atonement made by the death of Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, than which nothing is more insisted on in the word of God. They sink the necessity of revelation to a mere trifling expediency; and cry up the light of nature as a sufficient guide both in religion and morality. How long, then, think you, will they continue to insist on the Scriptures as the only creed, or test of true religion? Shall men, who conceive quite otherwise of religion on all these heads, admit such libertines into the office of teaching the people committed to their charge? If they do, how will they answer it to their consciences here, or the God of truth hereafter? No forms of confession can possibly be conceived in terms too strict or full, or with clauses too awfully damnatory, in order to exclude such candidates from the holy ministry. But if they will subscribe all sorts of forms, though ever so contrary to their principles (I will not say consciences, for surely they have none), as we see they are every day ready to do, allured with the prospect of gain; the governors of the church, however, having done their utmost to prevent it by close examinations, by strict subscriptions, by ample, explicit, and solemn, declarations, exacted of them, are excusable in the sight of God, who knows they can do no more; who knows they are not able to penetrate into the secrets of men's hearts.

But, to obviate the reasons for this only expedient in a matter of so high concern, the adversaries insist, that although we are obliged to hold the truth, so far forth as we are able to find it out, yet we are not obliged, on such occasions, to declare what we understand by the truth; that

the Scriptures no where tie us to this as our duty; and that, were it nevertheless so necessary, they would somewhere have prescribed it. Such declarations might, they say, be, in many cases, attended with persecution, and, in some, with exclusions little short of persecution.

Had the disciples of our Saviour been so tender of themselves, there had been few preachers of the gospel, not one effectual preacher, no confessors, no martyrs, and, consequently, no Christian church now in the world. But are we not 'to confess with the mouth,' as well as 'believe with the heart?' Can we all 'speak the same thing,' as we are commanded, if we do not speak at all? Does not the Holy Ghost expressly order us to 'be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us?' And how can we give a reason of our hope, if we do not tell what our hope is? Or can we discover our hope, and yet conceal our faith, on which that hope is founded? Or can we be under an obligation to discover our faith and hope, and even the reasons for both, while no man hath a right to ask what they are? But if other Christians have no right to ask, or be answered, as to these matters, surely the church, or they who are to call and ordain, must, at least, have a right to inquire, of those who desire holy orders, what are the principles they intend to teach? If a candidate is obliged to give an answer to every man, he must undoubtedly answer his ordainers, unless he takes them to be no men. Sure I am, were not such a candidate ashamed of his own principles, or afraid of incurring some worldly loss or inconvenience, he would never scruple to answer by any form or method his examiners should be pleased to take. Were he already ordained, he could not take it amiss to be asked his judgment concerning the faith, by the meanest of his hearers; and why is he more nice, when the like question is proposed to him by the ordainers? Why, they might refuse him orders, if they did not like his answers, and he does not care to prevaricate. Hath he reason to blame them for this? If he himself had the power of ordaining, would he ordain a man, who, he had reason to think, would instil into the people principles not only contrary to his own, but such as, in his judgment, are destructive of all their hopes *in futurity*? Or, if he did, surely we may be allowed to call

him a most unfaithful shepherd. Now what he would, in conscience, be obliged to do, on pain of his own damnation, he can have no pretence so bitterly to inveigh against others for doing.

But the goodly objectors tell us, they could with the less scruple subscribe, were it not for the damnatory clauses wherewith one of our creeds is clogged. The articles of that creed, say they, are too many, and too nicely scholastic, to be necessary to a faith which is itself necessary to salvation; and besides, although we are never so clearly convinced of them ourselves, we think it a shocking breach of Christian charity to pronounce damnation on those who do not believe them all.

Now, I insist on it, these articles are very few, if counted as they lie; and fewer still, if it is considered, that all the rest, not found in the other creeds expressly or virtually, are necessarily explanatory of two points only; the Trinity and the Incarnation; which, if not so explained and guarded, must be sunk in one or other of the heresies that have infested the church. So this creed is more explicit indeed, but not longer, as to its real content of articles, than any of the rest.

As to the nicety, the curiosity, and difficulty, of the terms wherein it is conceived; had it been clothed in terms less express and apposite, it could not so perfectly have exhibited the faith, nor so well have answered the end proposed by a declaration of that faith; for a declaration that is not full, particular, and clear, is a contradiction in terms, and can answer no other end, but to amuse and deceive. That the terms are not all scriptural, we own; nor was it possible they should; but, till they are shewn to contain meanings not warranted by Scripture, we have a right to use them; because we can in no language, but Hebrew and Greek, preserve the precise terms of Scripture; and because we are under a necessity, nevertheless, of declaring our faith in other languages. The whole merit of the question, therefore, resting in this, whether the terms of that creed convey scriptural meanings only, we ought to be attacked merely on the subject of their scriptural rectitude in point of sense, and not on the nicety of their choice, who were forced to use them, because no other words could so well have set forth the sense of Scripture on those heads.

Now, as to the damnatory clauses, annexed to the articles of this creed; if the belief of the articles themselves is necessary, those clauses must be necessary too; for why should not the necessity of that faith be declared, as well as the faith itself? Christ saith, 'He that believeth not, is condemned already.' Believeth not what? What Christ himself, and what the Holy Ghost, tell us in Scripture; namely, that 'Jesus is Christ,' or the Messiah; that he is 'the only-begotten Son of God;' that he is 'a Teacher sent from God;' that all his words are 'the words of truth, and eternal life;' that he 'is God himself;' that he 'took our nature on him,' and died a 'sacrifice for the sins of believers;' that 'he arose again from the dead,' and 'shall judge the world;' that the Holy Ghost is the very 'Spirit of God, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent;' that 'he shall guide us into all truth;' and that therefore whatsoever he communicates to us is truth, and necessary to be believed by us, if we will not give the lie to God, and thereby destroy our own souls. Such is our faith, and such the necessity of standing fast in it. Does the creed in question say more? Or ought it to say less? Surely a Christian may safely speak after Christ; and say again what the Holy Ghost hath said already.

What hath been urged is sufficient to shew, that the damnatory clauses are not of man's invention, and, consequently, no breach of Christian charity in those who pronounce them. But this will appear still more demonstrable, if we ever so little consider what are the true nature and use of those clauses, and what it is we do when we utter them as an appendage to our faith.

As to the first; these clauses were inserted in this creed, and in most of the ancient creeds, the Arian as well as others, by no means to intimate the condemnation, for want of faith, of such as had no opportunity of receiving the Christian religion; but of such only, as, having it duly preached to them, should 'receive it in an evil heart of unbelief,' and, 'holding it in unrighteousness,' should mutilate or corrupt its essentials. Accordingly, the creed in question says, not that all are damned who never heard of Christ; but, 'Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary, that he hold the catholic faith; which faith except every one do keep *whole* and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish ever-

lastingly.' You see here the true meaning and use of this clause; by which the other shorter, and seemingly more severe, clauses in the same creed are to be restrained and illustrated. Now, if the faith contained in the creed is necessary, thus its necessity must be expressed, in case we mean to be full and explicit.

And, that we may be so, without the smallest breach of charity on this occasion, we shall be clearly convinced, the moment we consider what that charity is. Now charity is the love of God and men. It will not, I believe, be alleged, that the pronouncing this clause hath any thing to do with the love of God; at least, I may venture to say, it is no sign of our want of love for him, that we utter that condemnation of those who deny the truth of his words, which he hath already uttered. Nor is it at all an instance of our want of love towards men, if we are so far from doing it with pleasure, that we do it with grief of heart, and a tender concern for the dangerous state of unbelievers, nay, with an earnest endeavour after their conversion. Besides, we are far from pronouncing this as our own sentence, or taking on us the authority of judges; we are far from levelling it at any particular man; but, on the contrary, include ourselves, in case we dissemble in our professions, or shall hereafter fall from the faith. There is, surely, a wide difference between condemning with severity; and believing, with sorrow and compassion, that another is condemned. A man who pronounces this sentence, because he sees it pronounced in the word of God, might die for the conversion and retrieval of those, on whom he is forced, by the conviction of his faith, to pronounce it. And surely, if this is very possible, it must be very plain, his heart was as far from want of charity towards his unbelieving neighbour, as theirs who make a difficulty of these clauses. The truth is, this whole cry of uncharitableness, on account of the use which the church makes of these clauses, is but a mere cant; and they who raise or keep it up among Protestants, with whom it is a primary principle to shew all possible kindness to such as differ with them even in fundamentals, know it to be but a cant; yet fail not to lay as much stress on it, as if they thought it a solid argument, in order to throw an odium on that particular church, which hath distinguished itself throughout

the world for its charity to all men, but more especially to these very objectors.

I have now gone through with what I had to say on this important, though controverted, subject; and have only this to add, that they, whose principles are conformable to those of our creeds, ought by no means to suffer their artful, their interested, adversaries to amuse them with their cry of, no articles, no creeds; but ought rather to consider coolly what would be the consequence, if we had none; what an anarchy of opposite principles, of horrible corruptions, of scandalous arts, and bloody dissensions, must immediately break in upon us, and throw all into confusion, both in church and state. He, who loves his religion and country, cannot without horror behold, from the rock of safety he at present stands on, this inundation of imposture, superstition, hypocrisy, cruelty, and, in the end, of universal ruin. Till, therefore, he is on good grounds convinced the principles of our articles and creeds are erroneous, let him never wish to see himself, and the flock he belongs to, committed to the tuition of a teacher, who hath not, with full conviction of mind, and with a sincere heart, subscribed the articles of our church. Let him never wish to see her communion shared by Papists, Arians, Socinians, and God knows who, enrolled in her ministry, perverting her people, undermining her foundations; and, after ruining her, tearing one another to pieces; all which, it is easy to foresee, must be the effects of either laying aside the present subscriptions, in complaisance to the plea of our adversaries, or of suffering them to be eluded by the artifices of the very worst of men. Such I must call those men, who have consciences capable of subscribing, and declaring for, the articles, as they stand, with principles directly opposite to the most essential. Good God! cannot cunning and dissimulation be satisfied to take up their abode with the viler sort of politicians; with the sharpers in gaming; with the sharks of law or trade; or with common cheats and thieves? but must the church of Christ be invaded by them? Must the house of God be polluted with them? Must the holy altar groan under the abuse of this infernal imposture, which, paying more respect to men than God, amuses them with a shew of principles they *approve* of, while it insults him, who cannot be amused,

with a bold and impious prevarication, in that very thing whereby he proposes to teach all men the fear of himself, and the love of truth?

May God, of his infinite goodness, after having so far left us to the trial of our own infirmity, be graciously pleased to avert the horrible evil from us, and to give us truth and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

DISCOURSE XIV.

CHRISTIANITY PROVED BY MIRACLES.

JOHN v. 36.

The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

OUR blessed Saviour, having every where represented himself as the Messiah, or messenger of God, sent into the world to teach and redeem mankind, here pleads the credentials of his mission, and appeals to the 'works which the Father had given him to finish,' as a full proof, that he came immediately from the Father, and was then employed in executing the gracious purposes of his Father. That these works were thoroughly well qualified to prove this great point to all men, and more especially to the Jews, who knew, or ought to have known, that the prophets had foretold them as the peculiar distinguishing works of Christ, I shall endeavour to shew, in this and the following Discourse. In this I shall treat of the works only.

What these were, we may see throughout the Gospels; namely, 'miracles;' such as, giving health to the sick, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, life to the dead, and driving out devils.

I shall shew, in the first place, That this was a demonstrative proof of our Saviour's mission;

And, in the second, That it was actually given.

From whence we must conclude, that all he taught, or empowered others to teach, under the authority of this proof, was true, and ought to be believed, as uttered and revealed by God himself.

To clear up the first point, it will be proper to begin with stating the right notion of a miracle. A miracle then is a work so evidently superior or contrary to the known nature of things, that nothing, but the power of God, can be supposed to effect it. Although the work of creation required this power, and therefore demonstrates the being of a God, yet we do not call it properly a miracle; because from thence arose that nature of things, which we regard as ordinary and stated, and therefore do not wonder at, or, at least, do not take it for a proof of any thing more, than the existence of its own proper cause. In this I accommodate myself to the general use or acceptation of the word; although, otherwise, there is no difference between the exemplification of the Divine power in nature, or against it. They equally demonstrate the finger of God, and, to a rational mind, are equally wonderful. As none but God could make the world, we may be sure, none but God can change the natural course of things, can reverse the stated chain of causes and effects, or produce any effect without a natural cause. We must also take it for granted, that if God, in any particular instance, or for any occasional purpose, communicates such a power, it must be confined to certain bounds, and cannot be exercised otherwise, than according to the commission or license granted with it, by the fountain of all power.

If any of the miracles, wrought in attestation of our religion, may be ascribed to a less powerful agent than God; for instance, walking on the water, or causing iron to swim; we have, nevertheless, a right to insist on them as authentic proofs of a divine mission in the workers; because they are evidently contrary to the known course of nature; because they are performed in order to an end worthy of the divine intendment; and because we have sufficient reason to judge, that God, the source of all power, could not have empowered, either in the way of command or permission, any creature so to interpose in a work of this nature, as that his intelligent creatures should be deceived in the only criterion, whereby a real mission from him may be distinguished from

that which is only pretended. All works therefore performed, as in the foregoing instances, against the known course of nature, and avowedly for a good end, of the highest importance, must be attributed to God, either as immediately causing, or else as commanding, or, at least, as permitting them, for that good end; and consequently, take them in what light you will, must prove the divinity of the worker's mission.

Pursuant to what hath been laid down, were any thing, directly contrary to nature, performed in the sight of one wholly unacquainted with nature, he could not understand it as a miracle, that is, as supernatural, or as a proof of any point whatsoever, beyond that of an equivalent cause. It would be really a miracle, or a wonderful effect of the Divine power, but not to his understanding. This shews, that the naturally invariable course of things, or agency of causes, must be so far clearly understood by those to whom a miracle is exhibited in the way of proof, as nature is counteracted, reversed, or suspended, by that miracle; or it can neither appear a miracle, nor a proof, to them. A man may be greatly surprised at a very striking effect or performance, which he never saw, nor heard of before; but he can with no certainty conclude it the effect of a divine and supernatural cause, if he knows no part of nature, to which it is evidently contrary; or knows not so much of nature in general, as to see nature alone could not possibly produce it. We cannot conceive, that Adam, supposing him destitute of all knowledge, but what he acquired by experience, could have been affected with the sight of his son Abel alive, some days after he knew him to be dead, in the same manner, as one of us should be, did the like happen to ourselves, now that we know, by the experience of all men, in all ages, what death is, and that no dead man naturally revives.

There is no other method by which the stated laws and principles of nature may be known, but by experiment. The natural philosophers of former ages, although they all planned their systems on this basis (for they could not possibly have another), yet, paying too little respect to it, and building on too few, or too hasty, experiments, did but bewilder themselves in the search of natural causes, and gave

us little else than mere whims and dreams for discoveries. Bacon was the first who put the study of nature in a proper course; and Boyle and Newton, following that course, arrived at certainty in many things, that had been utterly unknown, or but darkly guessed at, before their times. But they sought only for hidden principles, or remote causes; whereas all the rest of mankind have been, since the creation, employed, by an unavoidable necessity, in making such experiments as discover the ordinary and common causes of things. In this respect, every plain illiterate man is an experimental philosopher, who, by infinite trials, hath made himself so far acquainted with nature, as his own occasions require. Hence it is, that he knows the difference between sight and blindness, between hearing and deafness, between the free use of his limbs and lameness, between health and sickness, and between life and death, with more certainty, because on the strength of more experiments, made either by himself or others, than Newton did the difference between his own attraction, and the pressure of Cartesius. Yet had any one, in the midst of Sir Isaac's successful experiments, made in proof of his attraction, come in, and, by a single word, taught his ball of lead to ascend in open air, or caused his two bodies, already approaching by the force of attraction, suddenly to fly asunder, he must have taken the phenomenon for the effect of a supernatural cause, or else, contrary to all his experience, have given up his attraction, as neither natural nor stated. And why is the plain man to form any other conclusion, when, in direct opposition to the uniform experience of himself and all other men, he sees the blind endued with sight, the sick restored to health, or the dead raised to life, in a moment, and by a word or touch; or actually feels the delightful change wrought in himself?

But here the objector says, These changes may proceed from natural causes, unknown to us. The powers of nature, he tells us, and we grant it, are very great, and often hidden from the bulk of mankind; while some men, or some other creatures superior to men, who happen to be acquainted with them, may so turn the force of these prepollent natural powers against the operation of weaker, but more obvious, causes, as to produce those effects we call miracles. Of this, he says, we see instances every day; as, in the cure of agues,

by the bark; of rheumatisms, by the electrical shock; and of various other disorders, by secret nostrums. He says, moreover, that many common experiments in natural philosophy, and the tricks of legerdemain, seem perfectly miraculous to the vulgar. How far, he farther urges, the powers of nature may go, or may be known, and applied, by men, or separate spirits, we cannot tell; and therefore cannot be sure the performances we Christians call miraculous, might not have been effected without having recourse to a divine power.

We are obliged to hear him out, and must own, his objection might have a great deal in it, were it not for one defect; namely, that it is nothing to the purpose. Surely common sense must tell us, there is an immense difference between such effects as are produced by medicines, by instruments, by a long apparatus, and never without them; and such as are exhibited by a word or touch, without medicines, without instruments, without any apparatus. It is no matter what the secret powers of nature may be; it is evident, that, in the case before us, no power of nature was applied, but a power, if we may judge by ourselves, and universal experience, directly contrary, or quite superior, to those powers of nature, that are known to act with the greatest force, and without the smallest variation, since the origin of things.

As to the agency of separate spirits; allowing the objector a right to call them in, which is more perhaps than he will, in good earnest, allow himself, we may say the same of them that we do of men; they cannot supersede that course of nature, which God hath impressed on his works, without his assistance. If they are good beings, they will not choose to do it, in case they can; if they are evil beings, God will neither empower nor permit them to overturn what he hath established in the natural, in order only to introduce enormities in the moral world. It may seem somewhat odd, that men who believe little or nothing of angels, devils, or separate spirits, and, on most occasions, make a jest of such beings, should nevertheless, to serve the present turn, introduce them in a serious argument by way of poetical machinery, when nothing else can extricate them from a difficulty that pinches too close for their skill in sophistry; although,

at other times, they speak of their own reason as too sufficient to fly to any other being for higher wisdom; and do not readily allow, there is any thing in the creation that can do much more than themselves. But if those performances wrought by the prophets, by Christ, and by his apostles, which we call miracles, were only the effect of skill and legerdemain, or of a deeper insight into nature, than any other men were ever masters of, the world hath been more beholden to those deceivers, than ever it was to all the speakers of truth, and doers of right things, since the creation; for they died to bring credit to their illusions, and performed those illusions for no other intelligible purpose, but to reclaim mankind from sin and wickedness. It was impossible for them to give their doctrines the least air of divine revelations by any other means, than that of ascribing them to God, and proving they came from him by their wonderful works, which, as well as the doctrines, they ascribed also to God, in the words of mytext, and a hundred other places. After all, were neither the doctrines the dictates of divine wisdom, nor the works the effect of divine power; were the whole a mere imposition; what did the imposers gain, or hope to gain, by it, but persecution, misery and death? And what did the great deceiver, who, as they could never have willingly undertaken a design so destructive to themselves, must have forced them on it, gain, by it, but the reformation and happiness of mankind, whom to render as corrupt and miserable as himself, is all he could possibly have had in view? We do not find, on other occasions, that imposition is made the introduction to truth, nor falsehood the means of establishing honesty, and integrity of manners, in the world; nor do we hear, that other deceivers designedly labour to serve the rest of mankind, to the loss of all their own worldly comforts, and at the expense of their lives

Here the objectors put us in mind of the wonders performed by the Egyptian magicians, at a trial between them and Moses, before Pharoah; of the secrets whereby, Josephus says, Solomon could cast out devils, and whereby one Eleazar actually expelled a devil, before Vespasian and his army; and of the miracles wrought by that emperor, on two men, the one blind, the other lame, at Alexandria. If

these things, saith the objector, were done by natural secrets, or by invisible agents, so might those which you Christians style miracles. If they were done by the power of God, why should not those Egyptians and Romans, who did them, insist on the divinity of their religions, respectively, as well as others, for the like reasons, do on theirs?

But does the objector believe these accounts, or not? If he does, he can no longer surely call in question the truth of evangelical history, in relation to the facts we call miraculous, since those facts are infinitely better attested; but, if he does not, why does he fling the unscriptural miracles in our faces? Have we not as good a right to disbelieve them as he? It is true, as to the performances of the Egyptian magicians, they make a part of that history, which we, as Christians, do profess the belief of, and therefore are obliged to answer on this particular fact.

In the first place, what they did does by no means appear to have been performed, either by the power of their gods, or in vindication of their religion, but merely in ostentation of their own power, and in opposition to Moses and Aaron; and therefore ought to have no consequences as to religious faith of any kind. In the second place, whatever power it was, it could not have been the power of God; because it was baffled and overpowered by his, in the hands of his servants; and the magicians themselves acknowledged it, when they had unsuccessfully attempted to turn the dust into lice, as Aaron had done: 'This,' said they, 'is the finger of God,' Exod. viii. 19. Besides, they were afflicted with the miraculous plague of boils, as well as the other Egyptians; and probably suffered, not only in the destruction of the first-born, because there was no house in Egypt exempted, but likewise in all the other plagues. This could not have been the case, nor could they have failed in any of their attempts, had they acted by a commission from God. In the third place, all they did, was done to gratify a tyrant, and to support the cause of injustice and oppression. And, in the fourth place, their skill, or power, extended only to the doing mischief: neither could they undo what they had done; which shews their art was defective and confined, and gives it the air of a trick, far short of a real power over the nature of things. Hence we may

fairly conclude, the whole was either a mere juggle, or a diabolical delusion. But, if it was only a juggle, why, saith the objector, may not our eyes be deceived in other wonderful performances, as well as these? In some others they may; but not in those of Moses, to go no farther than the present trial; not only because the magicians themselves, who suffered, attested the reality of the plagues, but because the whole nation of the Egyptians both saw and felt the severe effects of a truly miraculous power in the messengers of God. Here surely was no room for deceit. But if, saith the objector, the magicians acted by a diabolical power, why may not others, have done so too? Or was not that power sufficient to control the laws of nature, contrary to the doctrine laid down, that nothing but the power of God can do this? Our Saviour hath already returned a full answer to the first part of this objection; intimating, that though the devil may be well enough presumed at the bottom of such apparent wonders, as are calculated to do mischief, which was the case in what the magicians did, or attempted; yet it would be absurd to suppose this malignant spirit should employ the power he hath, be it more or less, in promoting virtue, and reformation of manners. But, in the last place, although the performances of the magicians appear to have been supernatural, it is possible enough they may have had no real title to that character; nay, it is evident they had not; because these men could not go through with what they attempted; which sufficiently shew, they did not act by a power superior to nature; for such would have enabled them to produce lice, as well as frogs; but here they failed, and immediately confessed the finger of God; which was as much as to say, 'Here stops our art; and here it is, we acknowledge, distinguished from the truly supernatural power, by which our adversaries perform these amazing miracles.' But whereas the performances of these Egyptians seem altogether astonishing, and such as never in any other instance, were exhibited in a bad cause; we may presume God permitted them, for this once, when he intended so thoroughly to display the infinite superiority of his own power, that, for the future, all attempts of the like kind, and for the like purpose, might be stigmatized in the disappointment and exposure of this. And indeed, if we con-

sider their performances, and those of Moses and Aaron, in one view, they will not bear a comparison. The magicians could do only mischief; whereas the servants of God could only do good; I call it good, as well when they afflicted a guilty nation, in order to relieve one that was innocent and oppressed, as when they withdrew the plagues on the slightest sign of repentance in Pharaoh. The former were confined to three experiments, every one of them perhaps within the circle of natural magic; and when the latter proceeded, as far as the occasion required, to more proofs of divine power, were forced to confess the finger of God in these; which was the same as owning, what they did themselves, was no more than a stroke of art.

But the objector farther urges, That miracles, although confessedly the effects of divine power, are no proofs of a revelation; because there is no connexion, in the nature of things, between a miracle, and the matter of a revelation, whereby the one may be inferred from the other. How does it follow, quoth he, that because sight is bestowed miraculously on the blind, he that does it, speaks the dictates of God, and can speak nothing but the truth? His power cannot prove him proportionably endued with wisdom and integrity.

No! Although it does not prove it by immediate consequence, does it not prove it by a consequence so necessary, and so clearly cogent, as not to be resisted by a fair reasoner? God, we all acknowledge, hath wisdom and truth equal to his power. Wherever we see his power exerted, we must infer the presence of his wisdom and truth; and therefore the end, to which that power is applied, can neither be a trivial nor a bad end. If he who works a miracle says, he is empowered to do it by God, in order to prove the truth of the message which he brings from God, this certainly is sufficient to convince us, both of the importance and truth of the message; because, if we know any thing, we must know, that God would never lend his power to be debased to a trifling, or prostituted to a fallacious purpose. But is there any natural immediate connexion between the formality of an oath, and the fact for which it is brought in evidence? No, surely; and yet it would be madness to deny, for this reason, that an oath is evidence; for all the world

knows, that he who swears appeals to the all-knowing avenger of falsehood; and therefore, if they believe he fears God, they must, in proportion, give credit to what he avers, under the sanction of that appeal, although the fact sworn to is not, by the nature of things, made the immediate, nor indeed the necessary, consequent to the antecedent appeal. But our assent to the truth and reality of the fact sworn to, results immediately from our opinion of the swearer's piety; and that from the trials or character we have had of the man's religious principles, now put to the test by solemnly calling God to witness the truth of what he says, and eternally to punish him, in case it is false. Yet, strong as the reason is for relying on this sort of testimony, it may deceive us; whereas the testimony of miracles cannot, for it is the testimony of God, who neither will nor can deceive; and he who credits and receives it as such, hath only 'set to his seal, that God is true.'

I hope you have already so clearly seen the emptiness and folly of this fine-spun objection, that I need say no more to it. But it will be proper to observe, that it strikes directly at the very root of revelation, which cannot possibly give any other evidence of itself, as the dictate of God, but what must be drawn from miracles, wrought to prove the divine mission of those who publish it to the world. When I say, miracles are the only possible proof of a revelation, I include such prophecies as are attested, either by the event, to all who are apprized both of that and the prediction, or to the prophet himself, by the manner of his inspiration, which can be no other than preternatural and miraculous.

If the natural ignorance, together with both the natural and acquired corruptions of mankind, have made a divine revelation necessary to their reformation and happiness,[a] they have made miracles necessary also. Why should not the Governor of the world sometimes speak to us his subjects? Are we either so good as not to need it, or so very knowing, as to require no instruction? Or, on the other hand, are we so irretrievably lost, as to forbid, for ever, the divine interposition? Is God so destitute of justice, as to rest satisfied with universal wickedness; or so void of mercy and goodness, as to give us up to total ruin? We can no

[a] See Deism Revealed, Dial. I. and V.

more avoid inferring the absolute necessity of a revelation, from the wants of man, than we can the highest probability of it, from the relative attributes of God.

Now, that both these inferences are equally conclusive for miracles, will be glaringly evident to any one who considers, that as a revelation is of itself quite beside the natural course of things, so its evidence must be preternatural also. It is impossible for any man to prove, by arguments drawn from the nature or necessity of his instructions, that God hath sent him in particular to teach the world. He may reason more convincingly, and speak more persuasively, than other men, as Socrates, Confucius, and Cicero, did; and another man, of still greater abilities, may outdo him in these talents; but as all this is purely natural and human, it must be attended with two defects, either of them capable of rendering almost wholly vain whatsoever he can say. In the first place, he may be mistaken, and therefore may be misled. And in the next place, although he should not, yet they who hear him can never be sure of this, nor with any certainty distinguish between his truths and errors; for they know all men are liable to mistakes, men of great abilities, as well as small.

But if a superior being should come to teach us, and give us a law, this could not be done without a miracle. If therefore this necessary work cannot be effected, but by miracles, God may as well employ a man for that purpose, as an angel; because he can render the man infallible, as to the matter of his instructions, by an immediate inspiration, and, at the same time, give full evidence of that infallibility by the miracles he empowers him to perform. Thus were the prophets and apostles qualified for the promulgation and proof of revelation. The miracle of their own inspiration gave them full assurance as to the truth of every thing they were commissioned to declare. The accomplishment in part of what they foretold, and the miracles they were enabled to work, gave equal evidence of that truth to others. Such was the method God took to instruct the world in a right religion and law. Whether it was matter of choice, and another might have been taken, we know not. That it was the best, we have reason to believe, because it was employed; and the rather, as we cannot conceive the possibility of any

other. The enemies of Christianity, sensible of this, have endeavoured to prove a revelation needless, from the sufficiency of natural light. They have likewise laboured to shew, as you have just now heard, that miracles can be no proof of a revelation. But, these arguments failing, they have had recourse to an attack on the miracles themselves, by a ludicrous attempt to represent them as empty and senseless allegories; by observing, that all religions, howsoever absurd or false in themselves, have ever pleaded miracles for vouchers; and insinuating, that the miracles, pretended to by all religions, are equally legendary and incredible; and by sophistical arguments, levelled against the credibility of the scriptural miracles in particular. Thus hath distaste to the duties raised objections to the proofs of our religion; and the wrong head hath but schemed what the corrupt heart had suggested.

We are not to wonder, that the propagators of a false religion should pretend to miracles, inasmuch as there is no other way of proving any religion, whether true or false. But, with men of sense and candour, the pretended can no more bring the real miracle into suspicion, than the hypocrisy of one man can bring the imputation of villany on another. Credit is necessary to the execution of every dishonest practice; he therefore who carries on such practices, in order to credit, gives all the signs he can, of an honest and upright meaning. But does this prove, there is no such thing as honesty in the world? Or ought this to have any other effect on us, than to rouse us to a cautious circumspection in our dealings with mankind? But, after we have sufficiently distinguished the real from the counterfeit honest man, what then remains, but that we are to have nothing to do with the one, and to repose an entire confidence in the other? Just so we ought to deal in matters of religion. If a religion talks nonsense to me, or tells me what I know to be false, I need never stay to inquire about its vouchers, but turn from it, as I would do from a man, whom I knew to be a fool, or a liar. But if nothing of either kind occurs, nay, if the revelation under inquiry seems not only agreeable to reason, but proposes matters of great consequence to me, whereof I was not well aware before, it is then worth my while to examine its vouchers; for howsoever excellent it

may appear in its doctrines and institutions, yet I cannot receive it as infallibly right and true, that is, as the dictates of God himself, till I find it can plead the genuine signs of divine authority. If I find its signs can stand the test of a close scrutiny, why should I be staggered in my reliance on these, merely because I see another religion, which I know to be nothing but imposture, pretending to the like signs, when, with half an eye, I can perceive those signs are as spurious, as the religion they are brought to prove is in itself both false and pernicious?

That the miraculous vouchers for Christianity are fully qualified to stand the severest test of reason, hath been so often, and so unanswerably, proved, that to go about the proof of it here, would be either to repeat what others have better said, or to add the light of a candle to that of the sun. In consequence, however, of the principles I have laid down in regard to miracles, I must observe to you, that those related in Scriptures, as wrought in confirmation of our religion, were open and glaring facts, performed before multitudes of people, at all times, and in all places, as the performers were summoned to the work at the discretion of every one who stood in need of their assistance; that they were performed without preparation, without natural instruments, without human means; that they were acts of the highest beneficence and compassion; that they were unsparingly dispensed, in prodigious numbers, throughout a great variety of countries, and for a long course of years, as often as misery, no otherwise to be relieved, called for help; that they were such as no power but his, who can create, reverse, annihilate, as he pleases, could possibly effect; touching the sick into health! speaking the dead into life! walking on the surface of the sea! rebuking the winds and waves, and in a moment, reducing an outrageous storm to a calm, by two or three words! What other performances could more evidently demonstrate the finger of God? If an unassisted man can do these things, can thus arrest the course of nature, what difference is there between the power of God and man? But he who performed them, and best knew by what power he did them, ascribed them to God alone, and pleaded them in proof of such a religion as, of all others, stood least in need of external proofs; because it

speaks itself divine, in the distinguishing purity of all its precepts, and the visible superiority of its wisdom.

Here the caviller again puts in his word. Christ, he says, could not always exercise his miraculous power, Mark vi. 5, but only when the faith of the person disordered assisted his own cure; whereas the evidence of his mission arising from the performance of his miracles, the miracle ought to have been previously exhibited, that the faith might follow.

It is said, indeed, that Christ 'could do no mighty work in his own country, because of their unbelief;' but it is also said, in the same place, that 'he laid his hands on a few sick folk, and healed them.' Our blessed Saviour did not come into the world to 'cast pearls before swine,' nor to heal such scornful wretches, as were made infidels purely by their pride. At the time when he was repulsed by his countrymen, they had sufficient evidence both of his wisdom and power; for they could say, 'What wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?' They, nevertheless, asked, with the utmost contempt, 'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?' Were miracles to be thrown away on people in this way of thinking? When it is said, 'he could do no mighty work' among such, the evangelist, no doubt, meant, that he could not, consistently with his mission, and with the infinite dignity of his person, exhibit the effects of his divine power, in a place where they were to be treated with contempt, or, at best, only gazed at, as food for their impertinent curiosity. It was for the same reason that the saucy desire of Herod was not gratified, nor any miracles wrought, by way of experiment; but only when the wants and distresses of mankind, of the humble, and of the well disposed, rendered them proper objects of compassion. As to faith in the sick, it was not always made necessary to his cure; for the absent were often healed, and the dead raised to life. But as often as faith might be reasonably expected, it was required; because they who did not believe what Moses and the prophets had said concerning Christ, were very unworthy, and, in all probability, as unfit, to receive farther opportunity of conviction by the miracles of our Saviour. Miracles, indeed, must go before faith, where no foundation of belief could have been previously laid; but *where it* could, and through pride and contempt was not, new

missions, either from above or below, could not in reason be expected, although by a Herod, a Dives, or the very eminent inhabitants of Nazareth, who were too great truly to believe, unless on the preaching of a man of quality. With such personages religion, and its proofs, never had, never can have, any thing to do. They have infinitely more respect for a civil lie from the mouth of a dignified sharper, than for a plain truth from the worthiest man that lives, if his hands have ever earned him a morsel of bread. The objectors of rank and figure take it very ill too, for the same reason, I suppose, that Christ did not prove the miracle of his resurrection by a personal appearance before Pilate, Herod, the high-priest, and sanhedrim; as if religion, after repeated neglects and contempts, were to wait on the grandees with evidence proportionable to the infidel slowness of their assent. Our blessed Saviour, however, judged infinitely better in not meanly courting the testimony of men, who had already basely bought, sold, and complimented away, his life; men corrupt enough to be capable of stifling any truth, or vouching any falsehood, or, in short, committing any villainy, that might help to support a grandeur, already raised on vile intrigues, and infamous enormities, of the same kind.

But, after all, they who object, that faith ought to follow the miracles, and not go before them, as Christ required it should, do not consider, that the miracles were by no means wrought merely for the sake of the persons on whom they were wrought, but chiefly for the conviction of others, and indeed of all mankind. Christ shews this was the intention, when he is about to raise Lazarus from the dead; for he saith, John xi. 14, 15, 'Lazarus is dead; and I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there (to the intent ye may believe).' Here conviction and faith are made the natural consequence of a miracle performed on one who was dead; that is, in a case where the faith of the person to be restored was out of the question. Such was the effect proposed by all the other miracles. They were not to be performed, it is true, for the benefit of hardened and contemptuous infidels, but of such persons as had that degree of faith, which might be reasonably expected of them; and were not performed even on them, but in order principally to the conviction of millions, who neither had, nor could have, the faith intended,

without them. The objection, therefore, is impertinent; because the thing it requires, is the very thing proposed, and provided for, by all the miracles.

As we have already shewn, that real miracles are the only conceivable proofs of a true revelation, and that those which vouch Christianity to us, were real miracles, it now only remains to be shewn, that these miracles were actually wrought. But here, as in the last head, I am prevented by such performances, as have put this matter beyond all question. Yet I shall, as briefly as I can, sketch out the evidence, on which we believe the miracles of our blessed Saviour were really exhibited, as they are set forth in the New Testament.

There is no historical fact better known, than that Christianity took its rise in an age when human learning, philosophy, and refinements of all kinds, were carried as high as the wit of man was able to push them. It is equally well known, that this system of religion was not propagated by policy, by power, or by men of great abilities and address, but by men every way unqualified for great attempts, in opposition to all the learning, all the bigotry, all the force and cruelty, that both Judaism and Paganism could muster against it. It is notwithstanding farther known, that our religion made a most rapid progress over the world, and, in the space of two centuries, drew in above one half of the Roman empire, and had, moreover, rooted itself in many other nations beyond the verges of that empire.

Now, to a rational man, this must seem utterly unaccountable, by all the rules and methods from whence success in human affairs is always known to proceed. In this instance, the illiterate baffle the learned, the simple outwit the politic, and the weak subdue the strong, with infinitely greater expedition, than was ever known in any other, where the contrary qualities had the ascendant. Hence it is but natural to suppose the interposition of some power more than human. As Christianity confessedly inculcates a pure, a rational, and a most operative system of morality, this must be supposed a good rather than an evil power.

If the mind, after having taken this distant view of Christianity, in its marvellous progress, hath the curiosity to draw a little nearer, and inquire into the ancient records of a phenomenon so very extraordinary, it finds all ascribed, as

it was ready to conjecture, to a conviction raised by miracles, whereof an historical account, kept with a watchfulness and scrupulosity, not known in any other case, hath been all along preserved from the days of those who penned it immediately after they saw the miracles performed. In this account he sees Christ frequently appealing to the eyes and senses of all men, on the spot, and at the instant, he performed his miracles. He sees his immediate followers, who also wrought the like wonders themselves, and spoke to all nations in their mother tongue, though they neither did, nor possibly could have, learned their languages, preaching up their Master, and his religion, to the world, in the teeth of continual and terrible persecutions, and dying on crosses, and in flames, rather than recede, in the smallest tittle, from either the history of their Master, wonderful, as it is, or his principles, irksome as they seem to flesh and blood. If he guides his eyes a little lower into the Christian history, he sees the same work carried on with the same spirit, by a much greater number of preachers, and mankind running over by thousands to them, in every country, in spite of repeated persecutions, persevered in with such an obstinate fury, as was never heard of in cases where the provocation was most irritating, although, in this, there was absolutely none; but, on the part of the Christians, every where a perfectly passive resignation; nay, a joy in tortures, and a sort of rapture in the very agonies of a frightful and untimely death; which demonstrated the presence of an invisible Comforter.

After seeing all this, our inquirer can now easily account for the progress of Christianity, a thing impossible on any other footing, and wonders only at the miracles, to which it was owing. But let him not wonder, that an Almighty Being can, or an infinitely gracious Being should, do such things for the salvation of his creatures. Considering God's goodness, and our wants, it must have been by far more wonderful, if such things had never been done. Without a revelation, we could not have been reclaimed; without miracles, a revelation could not have been proved, or propagated; without both, man, the creature, the image of God, must have lived in sin, and died in despair, and the infinitely merciful Being must have looked on without concern. Mi-

racles therefore are rather causes of conviction, than surprise. Cast your eyes over the face of the earth, and up to heaven: Do you see any thing but miracles? Is not nature herself a miracle? Was not all raised out of nothing by the divine power? Was not every thing adapted, beautified, stationed, by a miracle of wisdom, and bestowed on God's intellectual creatures, by a miracle of goodness? And can you still be surprised at the miracles of his Providence, and at his suspending the course of nature, for a time, in order to the redemption of mankind? It is true, a miracle is, by its etymology, somewhat that is wonderful; but as man himself, and the whole world round him, is a system of miracles, he is apt to consider all this, purely because it is ordinary and common, as no way surprising; and wonders, with a hesitating belief, at such occurrences as are by no means more marvellous, only because they are more unusual. This, however, hath something in it too low and gross, too like the vulgar, to be found in a man of elevated thoughts and sound judgment. Bad as the world is, such a man is not apt to be surprised, when he sees another acting the part that becomes him, though such sights are not very common. And why should he think it strange, that the gracious Father of all should care for the happiness of his creatures; or, caring, should provide for that happiness by extraordinary means, when the ordinary are incapable of answering that beneficent end? If such performances as we call miracles, because they are against the nature of things, and are rarely seen, were exhibited every day, they would cease to strike us, or prove any thing, although still as really miracles, as at the first. Their frequency would deprive them of our attention, and sink them, in common estimation, to a level with the miracles of nature. But he who looks on nature itself as a most astonishing production of infinite wisdom and power, would continue for ever to regard them in the same light; because he could not but see their contrariety to nature, nor avoid considering that the production and reversal of nature require an equal power. If there were any intellectual spirits in being before the creation of the first material system, they must have considered that creation in the same light as we do a miracle, that is, as an astonishing effect of infinite power. But they would not have

been at all surprised to see the Creator manifest his wisdom and power; because they must have considered those attributes as active and operative principles in the mind of the Deity. Neither ought we to be surprised, that his mercy and goodness should be equally operative in the work of redemption, or that his power, prompted by those amiable attributes, should have displayed itself, as well as in the work of creation. God had at least as strong reasons for redeeming as for creating the world; or, to speak a little nearer to the language of Scripture, he had as many, and as inducing, motives to the new as to the old creation. As it is therefore no way surprising, either that a Being infinitely communicative should create, or a Being infinitely gracious should repair; so our wonder is not to be excited at the exertion of his power in the one instance, more than in the other, but only at the amazing effects of its immensity in both.

If this doctrine is received as true (and it is certainly too well founded to be rejected by right reason), it will prepare the mind, as readily to receive the proofs of revelation, from the extraordinary miracles exhibited in attestation of it, as the proofs of God's existence, from the mere ordinary miracles of nature. Hence it will appear, that there is nothing wanting to make the Deist a Christian, on his own principles, but to satisfy him, that the scriptural miracles were really wrought. And it will be infinitely easier to give him that satisfaction, if he comes to the inquiry under a clear conviction; first, that mankind required a reformation; secondly, that none but he who made them could reform them; and thirdly, that the repair and reformation of the intellectual world, once perverted, must as strongly be the object of divine intention, as the creation both of that, and of the material world, which was made only for that. Now I will be bold to say, these three points are as evident, as reason and experience can make any thing. Yet, God hath never, to this day, taken the necessary steps to our reformation, if the Christian revelation is not from him, if its inspirations are not his dictates, and its other miracles his peculiar works. No religion, pretending to revelation, carries the genuine signs of divine original, but this. This therefore alone hath a full right to the reasonings here laid down, and consequently is the only true religion.

Let us then, without reserve, give our understandings to its proofs, and our hearts to the methods of reformation it proposes; and may its gracious Author bless it to us, for the sake of his own infinite merits. Now, to the ever-blessed Trinity be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, henceforward for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE XV.

CHRISTIANITY PROVED BY PROPHECIES.

REV. XIX. 10.

The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

BY 'the testimony of Jesus' here is to be understood, that proof which Christ hath given of himself, as the Saviour of mankind, and which he hath also enabled his servants to give, by the spirit of prophecy, or the power of foretelling future events. That this is a strong and undeniable proof of a mission from God, cannot be doubted by him who considers, that none but God can foresee such events as depend on the free elections of men, not yet in being. When such events are predicted long before, and do actually happen, we must ascribe the prediction to infinite wisdom, and take it for granted, that the angel, or man, employed to utter it, was empowered by God himself so to do. And whatsoever point such predictions are brought to prove, we must receive as a truth, because the wisdom of God cannot be employed to attest a falsehood. Common sense tells us, the God of truth would never lend his prescience for evil purposes, such as, to support imposture, and give credit to lies.

As therefore we prove the being of God by the works of creation, inasmuch as none but he can create; and his interposition by miracles, inasmuch as none but he can reverse the laws of nature and creation; so likewise, when such events as none but he can foresee are predicted long

before they happen, we cannot but look on the purposes, for which predictions of this kind are made, as matters of the greatest importance, and every way suitable to the truth and goodness of him who lends his infinite wisdom to support them with this sort of proof.

Now, if Jesus, and his religion can produce this prophetic testimony in evidence of their truth, the former must be the real Saviour, and the latter, the true means of salvation, to all men. But that they have already done this in the amplest manner, I shall now endeavour to shew;

First, By some observations on certain prophecies concerning Christ, delivered to the world long before he was born;

And, Secondly, By the like observations applied to such prophecies as he and his apostles published, in relation to some important events that have happened chiefly since they left the world.

Let it then be observed, in reference to all proofs founded on prophecy, that such proofs must have little in them, if the prophecy predicts something soon to happen, and not improbable in itself; because an event of that kind may be guessed at by men who know the world, and are well acquainted with the common course of things; the Greek poet having rightly observed, in relation to such predictions, that the best guesser or conjecturer is the best prophet. But that prophecy, which foretells something highly improbable in itself, and very distant in point of time, if verified by the event, gives as high a proof as can be conceived of its own divinity. And, in case the event results immediately from the free election of those who bring it about; and farther, in case the persons who transact the event, being aware of the prophecy, endeavour to traverse it to the utmost of their power, but in vain, then both taken together fully prove, that God dictated the prophecy, and that, for the very end and purpose to which it is applied. But whereas it is possible, that one prophecy of this kind may be thus accidentally verified, though by an event the most unlikely; if a great number of prophecies, all predicting improbable events at a considerable distance in futurity, shall happen to be fulfilled; we can by no means avoid concluding, that the prophet or prophets did speak

the very dictates of God, and that the end proposed by their predictions was such as become the truth, the wisdom, and goodness of God, to promote.

Let us now apply these observations, the truth and justness of which no one in his senses can dispute, to the prophecies concerning Christ, delivered before his incarnation, and to such also, as he and his apostles uttered in relation to events subsequent to his appearance in the flesh. I do not intend to instance them all, which would be a work of several days; but only to take notice of a few, that answer, as you will presently see, the particular design of this Discourse.

The reign of Augustus, in which our Saviour was born, and that of Tiberius, in which he was put to death, happened, by common computation, at the distance of about four thousand years from the creation of the world. Malachi, whom some make the same with Ezra, though the latest of the prophets that foretold the coming of our Saviour, lived and published his predictions near four hundred years before the Christian era. The other prophets, whom I shall have occasion to quote, lived considerably earlier, and David in particular, about a thousand years before the birth of Christ.

At so great a distance of time did these prophets foretell such things of Christ, as not only depended on the freedom of those who were to perform them, but appear to be contrary, incompatible, and, to common apprehension, impossible; and yet the time of his coming is fairly fixed by Daniel, in the ninth chapter of his prophecies; and the place of his birth, by Micah, in the fifth of his. At this very time, and in this very place, did our Saviour appear, and afterward performed all the amazing things that had been predicted of him. You will quickly see why I call them amazing.

It was predicted, that 'his own familiar friend, in whom he trusted, who did eat of his bread, should lift up his heel against him, and betray him,' Psal. xli. 9; that he should 'be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,' Isa. liii. 3; that 'he should give his back to the smiters or scourgers, his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and his face to shame and spitting,' Isa. l. 6; 'that he should be wounded,' Isa. liii. 5, 'oppressed,

and afflicted,' ver. 7, 'and cut off out of the land of the living,' ver. 8, and Dan. ix. 26.

How contrary to this, in all appearance, are the other predictions, which speak of him as a happy king, as a prosperous and triumphant conqueror! 'Behold,' saith Isa. xxxii. 1, speaking of Christ, 'a king shall reign in righteousness. Behold,' saith the Lord, Jer. xxiii. 5, 'the days come that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and judgment in the earth—and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.' Thus God speaks to his Son, in the second Psalm, and that by the name of Christ, 'Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' The forty-fifth Psalm is one entire hymn to Christ, wherein the psalmist says, 'My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made unto the King. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most Mighty, with thy glory and with thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth, of meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.' The rest of the Psalm is laid out in describing the happiness and glory of Christ as a King.

This opposition in the predictions concerning our Saviour's success in the world descends even to those which characterize his person. 'Thou art fairer than the children of men,' saith David in the Psalm just now quoted. 'He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him,' saith Isaiah in his fifty-third chapter.

Now, all this, so seemingly contradictory, was exactly verified in our Saviour. To the generality of the Jews, neither he, nor his doctrine, appeared to have any thing amiable in them. He was despised; he was afflicted; he was persecuted; he was scourged, spit upon, and crucified. On the other side, 'the pleasure of the Lord,' as Isaiah said, 'prospered in his hands;' his doctrine spread; mankind

were brought under his laws; the kingdom of the world submitted to his. He is esteemed 'fairer than the children of men;' and, as such, he is beloved, obeyed, adored. Nay, what the Jews, blinded by pride and ambition, could not see, we have now seen; namely, his humiliation and sufferings, according to the prophecies, made the means of his exaltation and success; for it hath happened exactly according to the prediction of Isa. liii. 11, 12, 'Because of the travail of his soul, he hath seen his desire, and hath been satisfied. Therefore hath God divided him a portion with the great, and he hath shared the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors.' What human wisdom could have foreseen, that one of these seeming opposites should have been made the very means and reason of the other? The Jews, who could not foresee it, because they did not understand this prophecy, persecuted him, put him to death, and did all they could to destroy his kingdom in its infancy; but by these very means they proved him to be the Messiah, procured him success with the world, and both ways verified the seemingly contradictory predictions, in him and themselves.

I mention themselves; because this leads me to another seeming opposition between the prophecies that foretell the strength and happiness of Christ's people, and those that predict their misery and ruin. No terms can be stronger, nor plainer, than those in which both are foretold by the prophets, and both foretold as attendants on Christ's appearing in the world.

You may see the miseries threatened by Almighty God to his people in the sixty-fifth chapter of Isaiah. 'Ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain,' ver. 11; 'Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter; because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear,' ver. 12. 'Therefore thus saith the Lord God—Ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen; for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name,' ver. 14, 15. The angel Gabriel acquaints Daniel with the precise time of this calamity, which having pointed out by

the famous prophecy of seventy weeks, he says, 'The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city [Jerusalem] and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease; and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate, Dan. ix. 26, 27. This dreadful destruction, according to the prophecy, is soon to follow the cutting off, or murder, of the Messiah. The prophet Malachi sets this alarming event in a yet stronger light, and affixes it to the time of the Messiah. 'Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea and all they that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch,' iv. 1. But lest his people should not be apprized of the time when these calamities were to befall them, God says, 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord,' ver. 5.

Directly opposite to these judgments are the blessings promised by Almighty God to his people on the coming of Christ. 'In his days,' that is, in the days of the Messiah, saith God by Jer. xxiii. 6, 'Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely. They shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid,' Micah. iv. 4. 'I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen,' Hos. i. 7. 'The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob,' Isa. lix. 20. 'He will make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant. He will place his tabernacle also with them: yea, he will be their God, and they shall be his people,' Ezek. xxxvii. 26, 27. 'In those days, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more,' Isa. ii. 4. 'And it shall come to pass, that I will hear, saith the Lord; I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel,' Hos. ii. 21, 22. 'Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the

ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine,' Amos ix. 13. For the happiness of the blessed state under the Messiah, the prophets proclaim a jubilee to the whole world. 'Sing, O heavens,' saith Isaiah, 'and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people,' Isa. xlix. 13. 'Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel,' xliv. 23.

Here now are misery and destruction threatened, happiness and salvation promised, to God's people, and both at the coming of the Messiah. Before he did come, who could have reconciled these things, or pointed out a possibility of completion to prophecies so directly contrary?

The Jews dwelt only on the promises, and understood them in no other than a gross and carnal sense. The generality of them were not to be disabused of this mistake. 'In them was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for these people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them;' Isaiah vi. 9, 10. This our Saviour quotes and applies, Matt. xiii. and St. Paul, Acts xxviii. On this account Christ 'beheld the city of Jerusalem, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!—but now are they hid from thine eyes: for the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation,' Luke xix. 42—44.

Accordingly, the Jews, not knowing the time of their visitation by Christ, though so clearly pointed out by the angel in Daniel, treated their heavenly visitor with con-

tempt, persecuted him, crucified him, and praying that his 'blood might fall on their heads, and the heads of their children,' were soon after visited by the most dreadful calamities, and extirpated by the most exemplary destruction, that ever befel any nation under heaven. Thus were the prophetic threatenings verified, on the one side; while, on the other, the promises were no less signally made good to such Jews, and Gentiles also, as believed in Christ, and, by virtue of the new covenant, became the people of God. These, warned by their master, fled to Pella, a little city beyond the Jordan, and so escaped the calamity. Here they lived in peace and plenty, while the unbelievers were tearing and eating one another in the besieged city; and thus the prophecy by Isaiah was literally fulfilled: 'Thus saith the Lord, Behold, my servants shall eat; but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink; but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice; but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart; but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit,' Isa. lxv. 13, 14. Never was there on earth so happy a people as the Christians. They were sometimes persecuted indeed; but in that they rejoiced, and gloried; because it was for the sake of him who had bought them with his blood. There were none poor or distressed among them; for they enjoyed all things in common, and, as occasion required, sent relief to one another from distant countries. They were all brothers and sisters in love, all saints in piety and integrity. Among them, 'mercy and truth had met together; righteousness and peace had kissed each other.' How happy must a people be, who, in all their intercourse, were governed by such principles! But they were still infinitely happier in their expectations, founded on the true spiritual construction of the prophecies and promises. They then saw where their beautiful Canaan, and glorious Jerusalem lay. They counted it a thing of little consequence to them, how they fared in this world; because they exulted in the sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life. Here lay their happy abiding place; and hither they hastened with all the speed an innocent and holy life could give them. The prophetic promises were more than fulfilled in the consolations of the Holy Spirit.

Those foretold plenty of corn, wine, and oil, and temporal peace; these conferred inspirations, miracles, virtues, and ensured eternal peace and happiness. Those were the shadows; these the substance. Those were given to minds yet carnal; these to the regenerate and spiritual.

There was another thing prophesied of our Saviour, which it was much more improbable he should perform, than that the seeming opposites, already mentioned, should be reconciled in him; which was, that he should work miracles. The pretended prophet who tells the world, a divine person, not to be born for five or six hundred years after him, shall, at a certain period, spring from a particular family, and work the most stupendous miracles, must take it for granted, that when the period predicted shall arrive, the whole world will take him for an impudent impostor; because he can have no hope, that God will enable any one to fulfil his prediction, and he knows none but God can. That prophet may have some chance for a completion, who foretells a natural event, though ever so uncommon or strange; but he who foretells a miracle, must either do it on a full assurance, that God speaks by him, or take it for granted, that time will prove him a deceiver. But if a prediction of this kind actually finds its completion in the event foretold, it is then as evident, the prophet spoke by divine wisdom, as it is, that the performer of the miracle acted by divine power; and the truth and goodness of that purpose, be it what it will, for which the one was wrought, and the other pronounced, are doubly demonstrated. We cannot conceive a possibility of higher evidence than this; yet this hath been amply given to our holy religion. God, speaking by Isaiah, xxix. 18, 19, and xxxv. 5, 6, saith, 'In that day,' in the days of Christ, 'shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.' He also saith, xxvi. 19, 'The dead men shall live.' To this prophecy, and the completion of it, our blessed Saviour

made one and the same appeal, when John sent his disciples to inquire of him, 'whether he were the Messiah or no.' He dismissed the messengers, after they had seen him work several miracles, with this answer; 'Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.' Now, if this prophecy is genuine, and Christ did actually work the miracles therein predicted, the proof in favour of him and his religion, resulting from both, is the highest proof can possibly be offered to the understanding of man. But, that the prophecy was published by Isaiah seven-hundred years before the birth of our Saviour, we have the Jews, our adversaries, for witnesses; and that the miracles were really wrought, those eye-witnesses, who sealed their testimony with their blood, give unquestionable evidence.

Such proof for the truth of our religion meets the eyes of him, who candidly looks backward at the prophecies, that were published concerning Christ, long before he came into the world. He will meet with equal evidence, if he looks forward at those which our Saviour and his apostles delivered in relation to events then future, but since brought to pass, some of them by a supernatural power, and others by the voluntary uncompelled elections of men, who had nothing less in view than to verify these predictions. Which ever way the understanding turns itself, light and demonstration pour in irresistibly upon it.

Our Saviour had, by David, Psal. xvi. 10, foretold his own resurrection in these words; 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.' Before he was put to death, he so openly predicted the same event, that not only his disciples, but also his enemies, were fully apprized of it. These latter, after having crucified him, and pierced his very heart with a spear, said to Pilate, 'Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead; and so the last error shall be worse than the first.' On this,

Pilate having given the necessary directions, 'they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch,' Matt. xxvii. 62—66. Yet, either he was seen alive again by his disciples, or those disciples did a thing to the full as wonderful as his resurrection could have been; that is, although they had no reason to believe he came to life again, which is the same as to believe he was still dead, they all nevertheless preached up his resurrection, and faced every danger, every terror, death itself not excepted, rather than even stifle in silence the amazing completion of this prediction.

Now, let any one fairly weigh the force of this proof given to confirm the truth of our religion, and he will find it by far the strongest that ever was given for any fact since the creation of the world. The stupendous event is foretold one thousand years before. He who was to rise again, lest his enemies should mistake, or forget the prophecy, as the time set for its completion approached, gave them fair warning, and after they had crucified him, he would rise again from the dead the third day. Here they had every thing in their power requisite to prove him an impostor, could that have been done. Had they not put him to death, this must have proved him such; for they knew he had foretold his murder, as well as his resurrection. But, as their malice would not suffer them to take this course, wherein perhaps consisted what they, on second thoughts, called 'the first error,' Matt. xxvii. 64. Why did they suffer him, if he was but an impostor, to get out of their hands, before they had cut him to pieces? Or, why did they leave his disciples a possibility of recovering his corpse? When he was condemned, they could do with him what they pleased. When he was dead, if he was no more than another man, his working pretended miracles was then at an end, so that he could not possibly help himself. The truth is, they did every thing that could be done. They knew he was really dead, and they made it a thing impossible for his disciples to carry off his body. Yet they had not that body to produce, on the third day, nor any time after, when his followers proclaimed his resurrection.

The next prophecy I shall take notice of is that wherein our Saviour foretells his own ascension. No event could be

more improbable than this, nor therefore, if brought to pass, more demonstrative of a divine power. The tendency of matter to matter, and the actual approach of smaller bodies to the greater, when denser and heavier portions of matter do not intervene to hinder it, or, in other words, the gravitation of bodies towards the centre of the nearest system, is a law of nature, from which she never does, nor can, depart, while left to herself. So far is the most illiterate acquainted with this law, that he knows, no stone, no tree, no body of a man, can possibly be carried up from the surface of the earth into heaven, without a miracle. Our Saviour nevertheless foretold this of his own body. After having told Nicodemus, John iii. 13, that 'no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven,' he says to an audience of disciples, and unbelieving Jews, 'I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world,' vi. 51. Perceiving his hearers shocked at this, he says farther, 'Doth this offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?' as much as to say, 'You will be infinitely more surprised, when you shall, with your own eyes, behold this very body of mine ascending up into heaven; but after you shall have actually seen it, you will surely, from that time forward, have no doubts about either my prescience or power, be the thing I predict ever so contrary to the otherwise invariable course of nature.' Pursuant to this astonishing prediction, he was actually, in the sight of his apostles, taken up bodily into heaven, Acts i. 9—11.

But, before he thus ascended, he gave them another prophetic promise no less amazing than this, namely, the descent of the Holy Ghost, with the power of working miracles, and, among the rest, of speaking languages, which they knew nothing of before. This promise you may read in the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, and at the seventh and eighth verses; and in the second of the Acts you may see it performed; for there we are told, that 'the apostles being assembled at the feast of Pentecost, there suddenly came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, which filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues,' than those which they had before, 'as the Holy Ghost gave them utterance.' It happened at this time, that the celebration of the feast had drawn together an infinite multitude of people, who, though most of them Jews, spoke the languages of the countries they lived in, and were therefore to be addressed in those languages. This mixed multitude, having heard what had happened to the apostles, crowded round them, and to their unspeakable amazement, heard the gospel preached by twelve illiterate men, in twelve different tongues, to so many different nations. This wonderful accomplishment of the prophecy was attended with a suitable effect, that is, with the conversion and baptism of about three thousand souls. Never was there a more striking, or a more convincing, miracle performed, than this. Never was there so great a number of converts made in one day to any set of principles. The number of the converts proves the reality of the miracles; for all men know how difficult a matter it is to bring over one person, even from the most absurd to the most rational religious principle, by the ordinary methods of argumentation or persuasion. But, when such a miracle is considered as predicted some time before, the assurance of the predictor gives a vast additional force to the assurance and conviction of the believer. What prophet, but he who spoke by divine wisdom, durst have put his veracity to such a test as this, which nothing but the divine power could have borne him out in?

As to the prophecy uttered by our Saviour, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, wherewith he intermixes another concerning that of the world, of which he seems to make the former a figure, so far as it relates to either of these events, considered strictly in itself, I shall not bring it for my purpose; because the first is the prediction of the angel to Daniel, and the second is not yet come to pass.

But in the words of our Saviour, whereof I am speaking, and which are found in the twenty-fourth of St. Matthew's, the thirteenth of St. Mark's and the twenty-first of St. Luke's Gospel, there is a particular event foretold in St. Luke's account, ver. 24, whereby the kind of proof I am urging

may be greatly enforced. Our Saviour there saith, 'They [the Jews in the reign of Vespasian] shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive, into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.' St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, xi. 25, 26, joining this prophecy with another of Isaiah, gives us to understand, that 'blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so shall all Israel be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' The apostle saw the blindness of the Jews, excepting the remnant, as he calls them, ver. 5, in his own days, and knew the prophecy was soon to be fulfilled in the ruin of their country. But he also saw, by what he quotes from Isaiah, that the Jews, though carried captives, and dispersed among all nations, were to remain in their then present blindness, till the other nations of the earth had received the gospel, when his countrymen also should be converted and saved.

These passages, thus laid together, and compared with what hath happened to the Jews since, do justice to the veracity of the prophets, and afford our religion a monumental proof of its divinity. Jerusalem was totally ruined at the time prefixed. One part of the unbelieving Jews were, on that occasion, put to the sword, and the rest scattered over the face of the earth; and to this day, long after the extinction of all the other ancient nations of the world, remain a numerous people, distinguished in every country, no less by the universal contempt and hatred of all other men, than by a tenacious adherence to the law of Moses, to which they could never long be kept firm during their prosperity. Were they not thus preserved distinct from the rest of mankind, we should want the useful testimony of adversaries for the authenticity of the prophecies; and it could never appear, that the prediction, concerning their conversion and restoration, was really an oracle of God. It is indeed as evident, as any thing of the kind can be, that they are reserved by Providence for this great event; that they shall be found distinct from all the other tribes and nations of the world, when the time of their conversion shall come; and that consequently, the whole race of mankind must then see demon

strably the truth of our religion. I say these things are evident; because they tally exactly with prophecies already fulfilled in every other tittle, and because the preservation of a people, under such circumstances, for so long a tract of time, contrary to the constant course of all human affairs, gives high proof of a particular providence; a better proof surely for the use we make of it, than could have been drawn from this people, had the fulness of the Gentiles, and their universal conversion, happened two or three ages ago. We could have only had an historical report, at this day, of the extraordinary event, the truth of which the incredulous might have questioned, as they do all other reports; were the distinction between Jew and Gentile wholly lost, as it must have been in that case; whereas, the case standing as it does, we have every where before our eyes a miracle wrought, and a prophecy fulfilled, to refresh our faith. Hence it is, that St. Paul, speaking of them and us, saith, 'Through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles,' Rom. xi. 11. 'The fall of them is the riches of the world,' ver. 12. 'The casting away of them is the reconciling of the world,' ver. 15.

We ought not to forget, on this occasion, a fact, which may serve to shew, that the hand of God was employed, not only in the ordinary course of his providence, but even miraculously, to prevent all schemes for the re-establishment of the Jews before their conversion, that the ends proposed by their long apostacy might be answered, and the prophecies fulfilled. The emperor Julian, who declared himself a Pagan, after having professed Christianity, took it into his head to convict the prophecy of our Saviour, that Jerusalem should be trodden down by the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled, of falsehood. In order to this, he offered to restore the Jews to their own country; he encouraged them to rebuild their temple; raised vast contributions; and gave them all the assistance in his power. The materials were all prepared, and laid convenient, and the foundation opened. But, when they began the work, balls of fire broke from the ground, and destroyed the artificers with their apparatus. A modern libertine might have laughed at this miracle as fictitious, had it been reported only by Christians; but as it is confirmed by Am-

mianus Marcellinus, a Pagan historian, and no ordinary admirer of Julian, probably on account of his paganism, its truth cannot be opposed with any thing but impudence and nonsense. Had this design taken place, it could have only gratified the Jews, who were a weak and inconsiderable people; but must have thrown an indelible blot on the Christian cause, which was then abetted by a great majority in the empire. This Julian knew, and therefore espoused the party of the Jews against that of the Christians, although the principles of both were equally opposite to his own. Here we see the power of the Roman empire was not able to baffle a single sentence uttered by our blessed Saviour, nor to reverse the fate of a people desecrated by their own bloody imprecations, and the curse of Almighty God.

I shall give but one instance more of prophecies uttered by our Saviour, whereof the completion, had it not already happened, must have seemed almost impossible; and it is of such as relate to the persecutions and successes of his apostles, and other preachers of the gospel. To be continually and severely persecuted for any practice, and yet always to prosper therein, may reasonably be looked on as a thing highly improbable, if not inconsistent. And that the first should be withstood, and the second effected, by such instruments as our Saviour chose for that purpose, that is, the lowest, the most ignorant, and dastardly kind of men, makes the event, on the whole, still more surprising.

But our Saviour, who saw with better eyes than those of men, singled out these, as the fittest agents in a cause, to which man was to contribute nothing but a tongue, God intending, for the conviction of the world, to supply every other instrument himself. These men, weak as they were in themselves, could do all things in him: could boldly face every terror, and every torment, notwithstanding their natural timidity; could speak persuasively, and reason convincingly, notwithstanding their utter ignorance of eloquence, and learning in all its branches.

However, the men were not only weak and contemptible in themselves, but the religion they were to preach was infinitely distasteful and offensive to the world. The worship of a crucified Jesus was abhorred by the Jews; the worship

of one only God was equally offensive to the Gentiles; mortification and self-denial, in order to a thorough reformation of manners, and in pain of eternal fire, were doctrines infinitely shocking to both. As the disciples of our Saviour were to preach up to the world a religion so very forbidding as this, it is not to be wondered at, that their Master should tell them, 'Behold, I send you forth as sheep among wolves,' Matt. x. 16. 'Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues,' ver. 17. 'And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake,' ver. 18, 'Ye shall be hated of all men for my name sake,' ver. 22, 'Ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolks, and some of you shall they cause to be put to death,' Luke xxi. 16. All this might have been expected; but it is not a little surprising, that such men, so forewarned, should resolutely encounter these difficulties and terrors, and stand it out to the last.

It is still more surprising, that they should prevail, as they did, over a world, either so atheistical and wicked, or so bigotted to their old religions. But this also their Master prophetically promised; for he said, 'All power is given to me in heaven, and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations. Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,' Matt. xxviii. 18—20, 'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you,' John xx. 21, that is, with authority and power. Besides the Jews, 'other sheep I have [meaning the Gentile world] which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd,' John x. 16. That the work I commit to you may not fail through your ignorance, and want of elocution, 'I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist,' Luke xxi. 15, so that the 'gates of hell shall not prevail against the church' ye shall build, Matt. xvi. 18. 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth,' or crucified, 'will draw all men unto me,' John xii. 32, 'when the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled,' Luke xxi. 24, that is, 'when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in,' Rom. xi. 25. 'Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; and your accuser shall be cast down, which accused you before God day and

might. And ye shall overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of your testimony, and shall not love your lives unto death;' Rev. xii. 10, 11. Under your ministry, 'the marriage of the Lamb' with his wife the church shall be celebrated; Rev. xix. 7. 'Blessed are they which are called unto his marriage-supper,' ver. 9. When he arises to chastise the infidel and guilty world, you shall know him by his 'vesture dipt in blood,' ver. 13. and by his names, 'the Word of God,' ver. 13, 'the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; ver. 16, 'Out of his mouth shall go a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations,' ver. 15.

All the persecutions, thus predicted, the apostles and preachers of the gospel have already suffered. And all these triumphs, promised, they have already made. The world combined hath tried its strength upon them. Every severity, every outrage, that an ingenious cruelty could invent, hath bent its force against them, during ten long and bloody persecutions; but all in vain. They have overcome the world by the miraculous power of God, and by his 'word, that sharp two-edged sword, which proceedeth out of his mouth.' According to the wise choice and purpose of God, 'the foolish things of the world have confounded the wise; the weak things of the world have confounded the things which are mighty; the base things of the world, and the things which are despised, yea, and the things which are not, have brought to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence,' 1 Cor. i. 27—29. The wisdom of God only could foresee an event so strange. His power only could bring it to pass. The instruments were small and weak; but the hand which wielded them, almighty. The contemptible weakness of the instruments, and the amazing grandeur of the work, demonstrate the omnipotence of the worker. 'He looked, and there was none to help; he wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore his own arm brought salvation, his fury it upheld him; he hath trodden the wine-press alone,' Isa. lxiii. 3. 5.

What now shall we say? Is not the execution of such a purpose, so good, and so great, by such agents, so ignorant, and so weak, sufficient of itself to point out the finger of God? But if this is not sufficient, surely when we consider, that all this, astonishing and almost impossible as it

may seem in prospect, was foreseen, was foretold to the world, so many ages ere it happened, this at least must convince the most incredulous. Is there an understanding so stupid, or so immured in conceit, and false learning, as to be impenetrable to this beam of piercing light, which strikes through the mind with a double exemplification; to wit, both of infinite wisdom and power? Or, is there a heart so congealed to all sense of goodness by long habitual depravity, as not to melt at the intense warmth of that beautiful and powerful morality, which accompanies, and is mixed with, the light of this irresistible demonstration? Yes, there are still men, who, as Isaiah foretold, and our Saviour and St. Paul found by experience, 'can hear the prophecies, and not understand them;' can 'see their wonderful accomplishment, and not perceive' the evidence it inculcates; and why? 'because the heart of these people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and healed,' Acts xxviii. 26, 27. This prophecy, and its completion, are not less wonderful than the rest; to hear, and not hear! to see and not see! both to hear and see, and yet not to understand! No man uninspired durst have predicted a resistance to proofs, so glaringly strong, in minds not altogether destitute of sense and reason. But this prophecy is so literally verified before our eyes, that I trust, it will prove no small refreshment to our faith. We may make the same use of it, that St. Paul did, in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, where he observes its completion on the unbelieving Jews, and tells us, that 'through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles.' In this light, I cannot help looking on it as equally surprising and demonstrative.

Let us, however, leave these unhappy men to their 'evil hearts of unbelief;' and let us 'hold fast the faith,' together with the blessed hope of everlasting life, which God hath given us in his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

END OF VOL. I.

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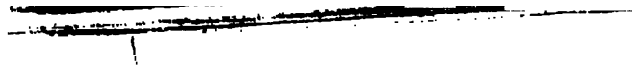

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